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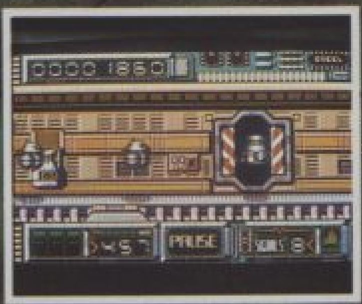


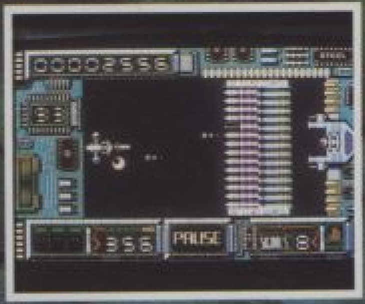
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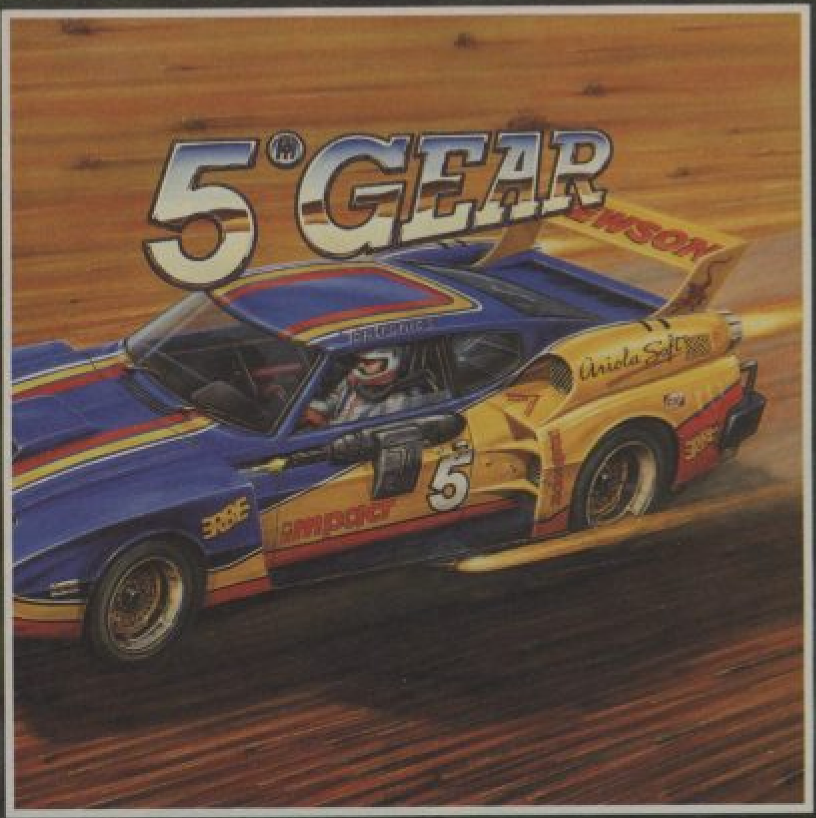
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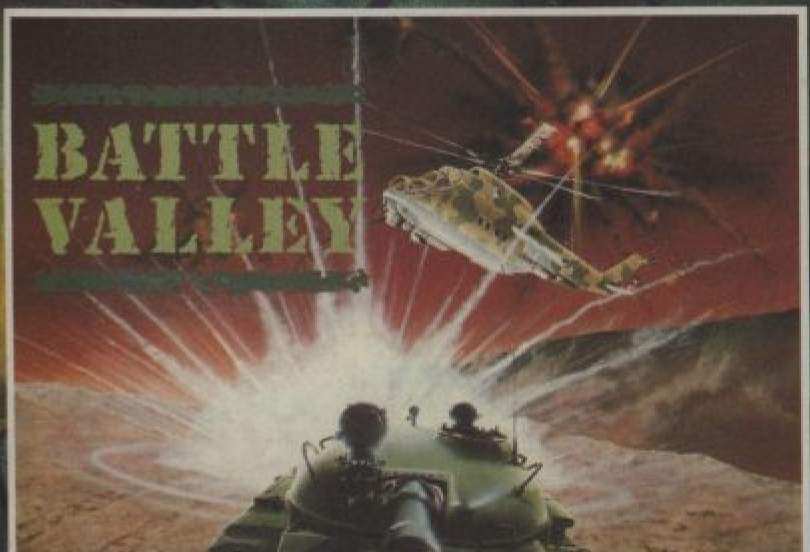


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The Games machine

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Batman on the PC Engine, Robots and Nintendo's 16-bit Super Famicon — page 17





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NEWS 'N' PREVIEWS

STUFF THAT HAPPENED — STUFF THAT WILL

Sam's our man



Miles Gordon Technology's Sam Coupe is finally ready to be launched. The Coupe is the first in what is expected to be a whole range of computers from the Welsh company. The Coupe was first announced as a 'super Spectrum' by TGM's sister magazine CRASH almost two years ago. Since then both the machine and MGT have undergone several major changes.

The Coupe features a Spectrum-compatible mode which allows it to run up to 90% of Spectrum software. At the recent launch, MGT demonstrated several Spectrum games running on the Coupe with no apparent problems. But the Coupe offers much more to the potential upgrader than just Spectrum compatibility. It features 256K RAM, a six-channel stereo sound chip, 128 colours onscreen, WIMP environment, built-in 3.5-inch Citizen disk drive, and cassette and MIDI ports for just £150.

There are four operation modes. Modes 1 and 2 are Spectrum-compatible while Mode 3 features an 80-column display, particularly suited to word processing applications. The final mode has a resolution of 256x192 pixels with up to 128 colours onscreen. However, in this mode only 16 colours are allowed on any one line. Hopefully any games software developed specifically for the Coupe will exploit this mode. To demonstrate the Coupe's graphics capabilities MGT ported screens over from an ST art package — they looked almost identical!

The Coupe was originally intended for the overseas markets. Bruce Gordon developed a custom chip which performed many of the functions normally carried out by several chips. MGT intended to sell this chip to Third World countries so that they could manufacture their own computers. They needed a low cost, reliable chip which was compatible with a wide range of software. At the time that the Coupe was first conceived the Spectrum was the most popular computer in Britain, with an estimated four million units sold worldwide — so it made sense to make it Spectrum compatible. However, once news of the Coupe had been broken, MGT received enthusiastic enquiries from people in Britain asking for more details on the computer. So MGT yielded to public demand and decided to launch the Coupe in Britain.

MGT are aiming the machine very much at the man in the street. The emphasis is on fun not on new technology.

Alan Miles: 'When people bring out home computers, reviewers are still concerned with the techy bits; how many MIPS does it run at, how many megabytes has it got, is it 8-bit or 16-bit, as if there was a myth about one being better than the other. Whether it's 8- or 16-bit is not going to affect whether a person is going to be able to play games or use this machine in education. Sure, processing power helps with graphics and speed but talking in terms of technology it often confuses the user. The danger is that we get so wrapped up in the technology that we stop producing machines that are actually useful. As a company our philosophy is that we're against what we like to term 'technobabble'.'

Nevertheless the Coupe isn't just about games. MGT are hoping that the machine will catch on in schools. The Coupe includes networking capabilities and several could be linked together at a fraction of cost of one reasonably powerful PC.

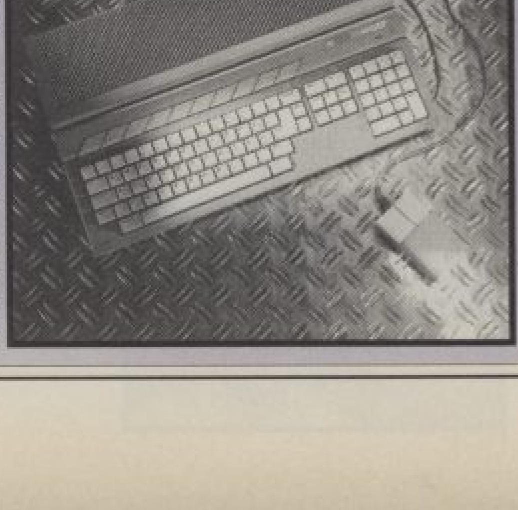
MGT have contracted a number of industry personalities to develop different aspects of the Coupe: David Whittaker (the most prolific games musician) is developing the music drivers for software houses; Bo Jangeborg (author of the Fairlight games and Artist I and II) is writing a graphics package; Dr Andy Wright (author of the user-friendly BetaBasic) is responsible for SAM BASIC and a few more lesser known figure are concentrating on areas such as education, development languages and MIDI packages. MGT are hoping they've covered every area of computing.

Alan Miles continues: 'We've arisen from being a mail order company and we've been close to customers over a period of time. We hope what we're doing is listening to what people actually want. The Coupe has been through several changes since the original specification because of what customers have told us. However, we don't want to be judged solely on product, though we think the product is pretty good, we would like to be judged equally on the quality of service that we provide. To be the sort of company that people can turn to when they've got a problem.'

STop the press

Atari unveiled the latest additions to the ST range of computers at the PC Show. At £499 the STE will replace the 1040. The new machine comes with 1Mb RAM, built in graphics blitter chip, 4096 colour palette, as opposed to the ST's 512 colours, a new stereo sound chip capable of playing samples of similar quality to the Amiga, hardware scrolling and two extra non-standard joystick ports.

The improvements will allow the computer to run at faster speeds since specialist chips will now be handling graphics and scrolling. However, it's doubtful whether software will appear any better despite the increase in colour palette, the STE is still restricted to a maximum of 16 colours onscreen.



Atari report that at least 30 software houses have promised software to exploit the STE's extra capabilities.

Also announced was the Atari TT range. The basic TT is a 32-bit machine and offers ST compatibility. The new machine will cost under £2000 and include a 30Mb hard drive, 2Mb RAM, 4096 colour palette with up to 256 colours onscreen. The TT/X includes a 60Mb hard drive, 4Mb RAM and also runs the high level business operating system Unix, but will cost in the region of £3500-4000.

ATARI: Railway Terrace, Slough SL2 5BZ. Tel: (0753) 33344.

PRESS ANY KEY

MGT was specifically formed with the Coupe in mind. However, a small company couldn't possibly fund the resources needed to launch a computer. So MGT developed disk interfaces for the Spectrum to raise money. Earlier this year MGT became a Public Limited Company.

Miles again: 'The Disciple interface was developed in a direct line to the Coupe. It was designed to test out the disk and printer interface that we wanted to incorporate and most important how a network would work. It also brought in money and gave us the opportunity to build up the company structure necessary to launch the Coupe. We needed to grow to the size where we could take on board the enquiries that we would get from customers to be able to give them the sort of service they want. That's where the Sam character comes in. Sam epitomises the quality of customer services we want to give. The manual is written by Mel Croucher and is being made as simple to understand as possible, with illustrations by Robin Evans.'

MGT are currently in negotiations with top software houses to convert their popular titles to exploit the Coupe's more sophisticated modes. One of the first games to be converted will be US Gold's Strider. US Gold's software development manager, Dave Baxter, estimates that it will only take a couple of weeks or so to convert the game to the Coupe. Baxter describes the Coupe as an '8-bit ST'. Also, Code Masters are releasing Dizzy III with System 3 converting Myth. Art and music packages will be completed soon after the machine is launched. Prices for these packages have yet to be finalised but they should be less than £50. So you could set up a MIDI sequencing system for under £200.

The Coupe will be available in mid-November. Initial quantities of the machine will only be available through mail order. However, MGT fully expect it to be available in the high street shops in the near future.

MGT: Lakeside, Phoenix Way, Swansea SA7 9EH. Tel: (0792) 791100.

Tronic Blitz Coders

After last month's startling news of Code Masters' groundbreaking price drop to £5.99 for all their 16-bit software, Virgin Mastertronic have announced the creation of 16 Blitz — ST, Amiga and PC games at only £4.99. Mastertronic's Andrew Wright justified the new move to an even lower price than their original £9.99 explaining that 'the market was ripe for 16-bit budget software at a realistic price.' Whereas sales director Alan Sharman hoped that the new price would not only increase sales, it would also allow software houses another option after the route to compilations, and ultimately reduce the amount of piracy. Initially to be launched with 21 products, Mastertronic hope the new label will create four releases a month. 16 Blitz will contain previously-unreleased games, old full price games and rereleases of budget games. The first batch to reach the shelves in mid-October will include: Motorbike Madness, Road Wars II (an all-new Amiga version), Kelly X (a speedboat shoot-'em-up) and new PC versions of Scorcery+, Knight Games and World Darts.

Troubles at Epyx

Rumours of Epyx's demise were denied by the company last week, although they did confirm that 50% of the staff had been asked to leave. Epyx announced that they would now be turning into a development house (solely programming games), rather than a publisher (distributing other people's games). This also means the demise of the Epyx label, although the UK will still see Epyx-developed games through US Gold. Epyx also announced that they will primarily concentrate on programming for the new Atari Lynx, as well as doing projects for the Nintendo, PC Engine and Sega. However, more investigation also revealed that a further 25% people had left of their own accord, including RJ Mical and Dave Needle, the designers of the Atari Lynx hand-held. With the departure of these two great minds, it would seem that Epyx have the hardest times ahead of them.

Bring us the wine

Just a short note to express our thanks to Hewson, whose amazing Onslaught launch at Warwick Castle was so enjoyed by representatives of CRASH, ZZAP and, the best, TGM. The night was full of banqueting, much quaffing of the local brew and generally raucous activity. So, wench, bring me Andrew Hewson's head on a platter! Onslaught, which, incidentally, is looking very impressive, is released on the ST and Amiga next month.



Dark knights for Commodore

After the disappointing Air Miles pack, Commodore have announced the contents of their latest Amiga and C64 bundles — just three months after Atari hinted that, due to dealer pressure, their Power Pack could be their last games bundle. The packs are thrown together thus...

Amiga Batman Pack: A500 computer, Batman The Movie, F-18 Interceptor, New Zealand Story and Deluxe Paint II. Price £399.

C64 Light Fantastic: C64 with 1530 datacorder, Cheetah lightgun (with levels from Rambo III, RoboCop, Hypersports, Combat School), 3-D glasses, Time Traveller, Gangster, Army Days, Mike Read's Pop Quiz, Batman The Caped Crusader, Pitman Typing Tutor, a music package, art package, and an arcade construction set. Price £149. Present C64 owners can upgrade for £39.95.

Just Wild about adventures

Remember those dark days before the razor-sharp quill of Paul 'Rigsby' Rigby? A mysterious dude by the name of Rob Steel handled adventure reviews, much like the equally enigmatic Harlequin from past issues of ZZAP!, our sister Commodore magazine. The man holding their reins was Nik Wild, erstwhile TGM reviews supremo, who has now launched Inter-Action, essentially a mail-order adventure fanzine.

£15 annual subscription entitles the member to six issues of 50+ pages, each giving news, reviews, tips and more. RPG and strategy games will also have their place and newsletters will give up-to-the-minute information in-between issues.

Nik Wild, Rob Steel, The Harlequin AND Auntie Marg can be contacted at Inter-Action, The Cottage, Ashford Carbonell, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 4DB.

Where's the Rainbow Island review?

Well, the truth is that nobody knows when the game will reach the shops, or even if it will appear in its present form. The arcade producer of the cutesy Bubble Bobble follow-up, Taito, has prevented MicroProse releasing it because they say the conversion rights were sold to Telecom Soft, with no clause for third party licensees. MicroProse are hanging onto their source code while the situation resolves itself. It could mean that Taito decide to take their licence elsewhere. But till we know what the Rainbow Islands on the street will be, we won't review the MicroProse version.



Golden Boot

Golden Boot developed by Ocean France should be kicking in screens this autumn. Littered with numerous static action pictures, Golden Boot could be the big challenger to Anco's Kick Off sequel, Player Manager, for the top 16-bit football game. 8-bit versions are also planned. (Amiga screen.)





The Blue Angels



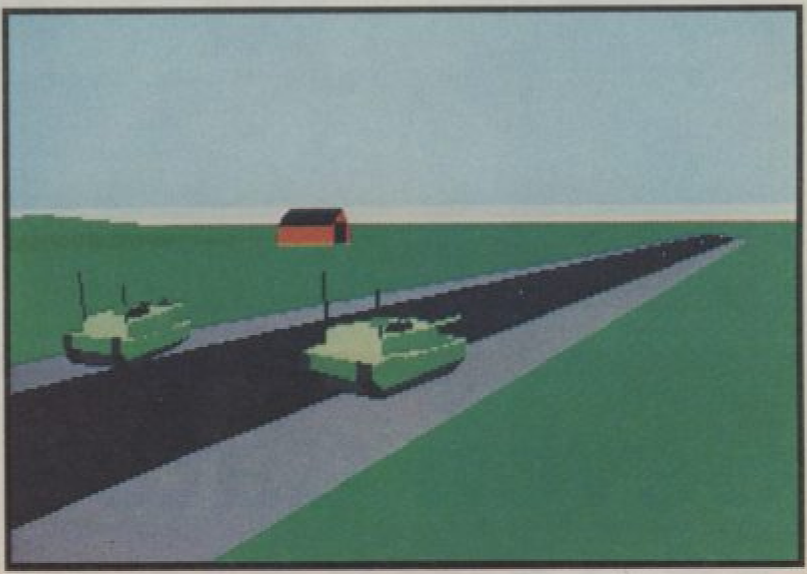


Here's a quick look at one of the Code Masters games to be bundled with the new Cheetah **Defender lightgun**. Available now for the Spectrum and C64. (Spectrum screen.)

After the suspension of Conspiracy: The Deadlock Files due to programmer illness, Accolade have hit back this month with the announcement of a brand-new flight sim. **The Blue Angels** are the USAF equivalent to our own Red Arrows, Accolade's game puts you in the cockpit of a F/A-18 Hornet alongside three other jets. Available by the end of the year on 16-bit formats and the C64. (PC screen.)

M1 Tank Platoon

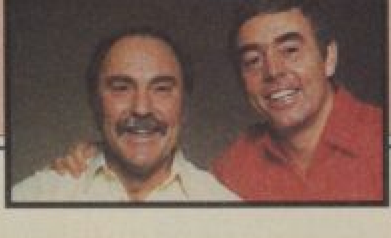
MI Tank Platoon is MicroProse's latest entry into the tank simulation market, joining the likes of Steel Thunder and Abrams Battle Tank. Using a novel polygon approach, Tank Platoon should be out on the PC now.



Saint 'n' Greavsie



And you thought once a week was bad, now you can get a load of **Saint 'n' Greavsie** (Grandslam) any time of the week. They're a funny pair, aren't they? And, let's face it, it's a funny old game... The trivia game is available on all formats now. (C64 screen.)



Chambers of Shaolin

Chambers of Shaolin is the first product of Grandslam's new deal with European programming house, Thalion. Similar to numerous other oriental beat-'em-ups, Chambers of Shaolin should be out now on ST, Amiga and C64 now. (Amiga screen.)



PRESS ANY KEY



Ivanhoe

On the ST and Amiga only, **Ivanhoe** (Ocean) was developed in France (animation is by an ex-Asterix cartoonist) for a Christmas release. Horizontally-scrolling action pits the legendary hero against all sorts of wizards, pirates, hunters and dragons. Released for Christmas (Amiga screen.)





Dragon Flight



Now here's a mysterious little wonder that Grandslam recently previewed up in the TGM offices. **Dragon Flight** is essentially an RPG, although its producers reckon it'll have enough in it to appeal to all sorts of players. Available in November on the 16-bits. (Amiga screen.)

Demons Tomb



Here's the first of Virgin Mastertronic's new range of mega 16-bit games. **Demon's Tomb** is still deep in development but judging by the pictures we've seen they're spending lots of time on it. Planned for late 1989. (Amiga screen.)



Seven Gates of Jambala



Seven Gates of Jambala (Grandslam) is an action-biased arcade adventure in which you guide the pointy boots of a little green goblin through the spooky caverns of a vast monster-filled castle. The highlights of the game are the huge dragons which must be defeated in order to complete the quest. Available on ST, Amiga and C64 in December. (ST screen.)





Elvira



Elvira — Mistress of the Dark is the creation of Cassandra Peterson, know Stateside for her TV show, Movie Macabre. Currently touring the UK promoting the release of the video of her recent film, Elvira has also lent her ample body and name to Tynesoft's new Horrorsoft label. After their well-received Personal Nightmare, Horrorsoft are playing their trump card with Elvira. Known to horror film fans worldwide, Elvira has given tremendous support to the small (but, like Elvira herself, perfectly formed) software company. The game of the film of the woman should be out by the end of October on all 16-bit formats. (Amiga screen.)





Last Ninja II for the Konix

The first games for the **Konix** Multi System were recently unveiled at the joystick manufacturer's Welsh headquarters. They ranged from old favourites like **Last Ninja II** to new twists on old formats like Jeff Minter's **Mutant Camels.** Release is now November.

Thalamus spring back into action with the first of a spate of new releases

C64 supremos, Thalamus, have announced the launch of four new 16-bit/C64 products. Currently called **Xenodrome** (although expect it to appear under another name), the first is another to join the long line of successful Thalamus shoot-'em-ups. Then there's **The Search For Sharla** to be released in spring, an adventure of epic proportions; Retrograde (C64 only), a bounty hunter collect-'em-up; and Hi-Hat, Bongos... err, sorry, Snare (C64), a puzzle game from the author of Barbarian II.

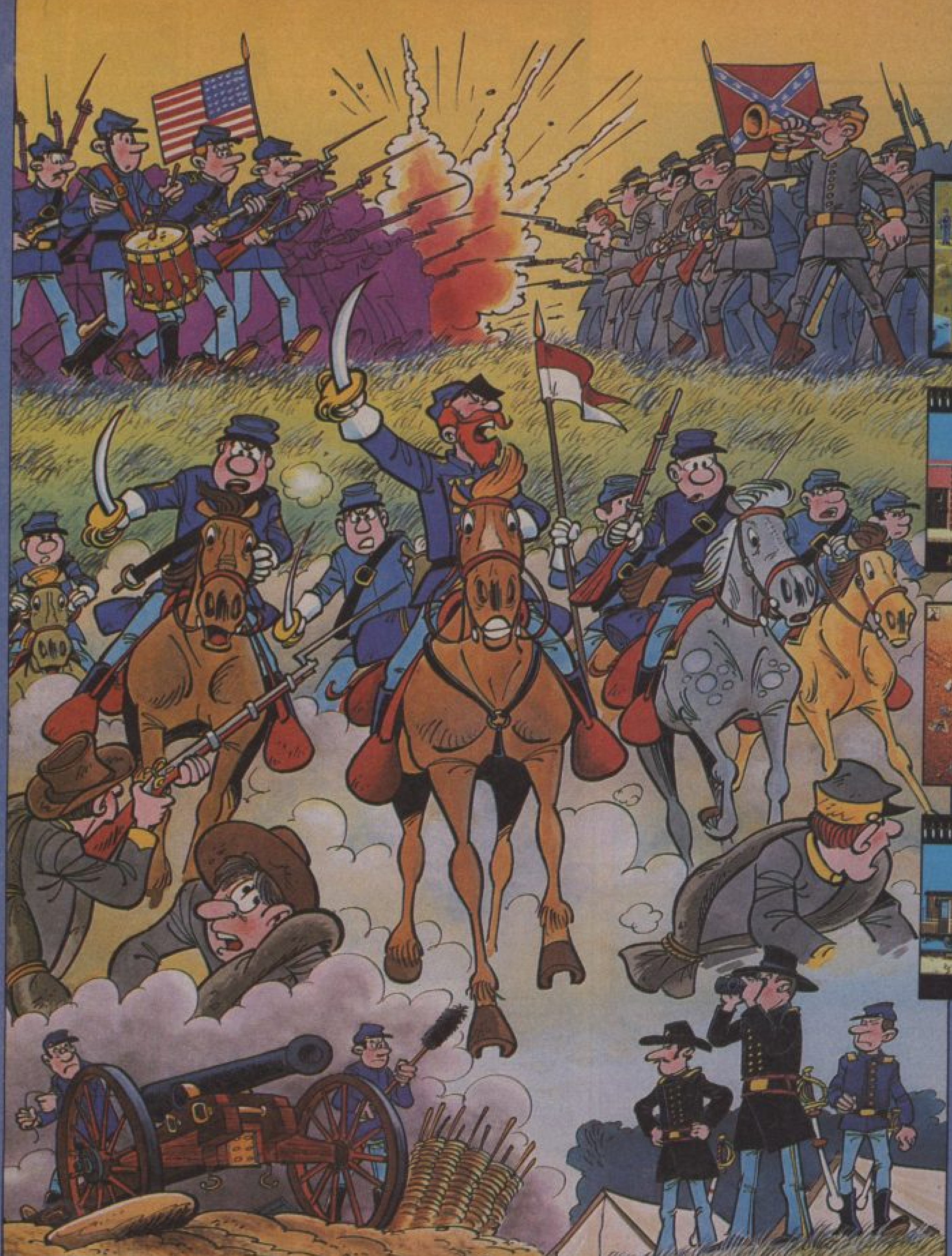


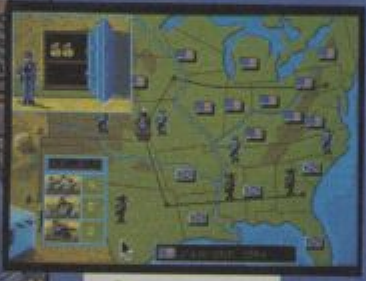


Terry's Big Adventure

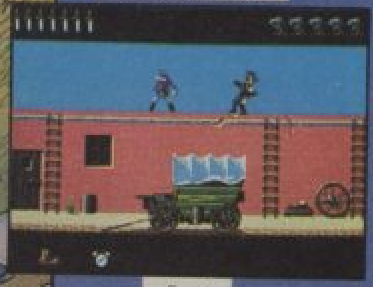


Well, here it is: **Terry's Big Adventure** (Shades). You're Terry (master in the art of yo-yo throwing) who goes on a big adventure through 12 levels of arcade puzzles. Catch up with the trendy little character on ST, Amiga (£16.99) and C64 (£6.99/£9.99) now. (Amiga screen.)





Strategic map



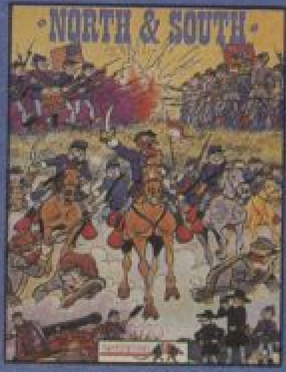
Fort



Battle field



Train



NORTH & SOUTH



CHAAARGE !!! Dive into the hilarious world of the Belgium comic book "LES TUNIQUES BLEUES" (CAUVIN & LAMBIL). For one or two players, you are either Yankee or Confederate, so re-creating the true atmosphere of the American Civil War. NORTH & SOUTH, an original, explosive cocktail of strategy and arcade. Surround your enemy using the strategic map of the American East Coast. Crush them on the super arcade battle field. Send your best men to stop the gold-filled trains, and then rush the forts to free the enemy occupied towns. NORTH & SOUTH, a game filled with options. Start the game from a choice of four different years, three levels of difficulty and a special disaster mode which includes violent storms stopping all movement of troops, re-inforcements arriving from Europe, and not forgetting the Indians and Mexicans whose only pleasure in life is attacking you !



If that wasn't enough to wet your appetite, you can also choose between a "strategy-only" game and an "strategy-arcade game", and with the superb 2 players version that has to be played to be believed, it only leaves us to give the order "To your sabres !!"

Available on AMIGA, ATARI ST 2 DISKS, PC compatibles 2 DISKS.

INFOGRAMES

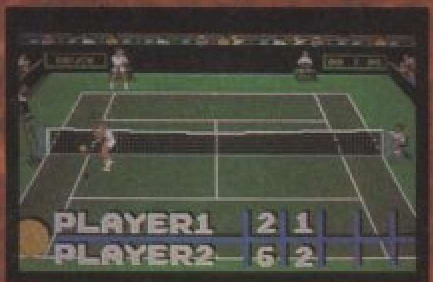
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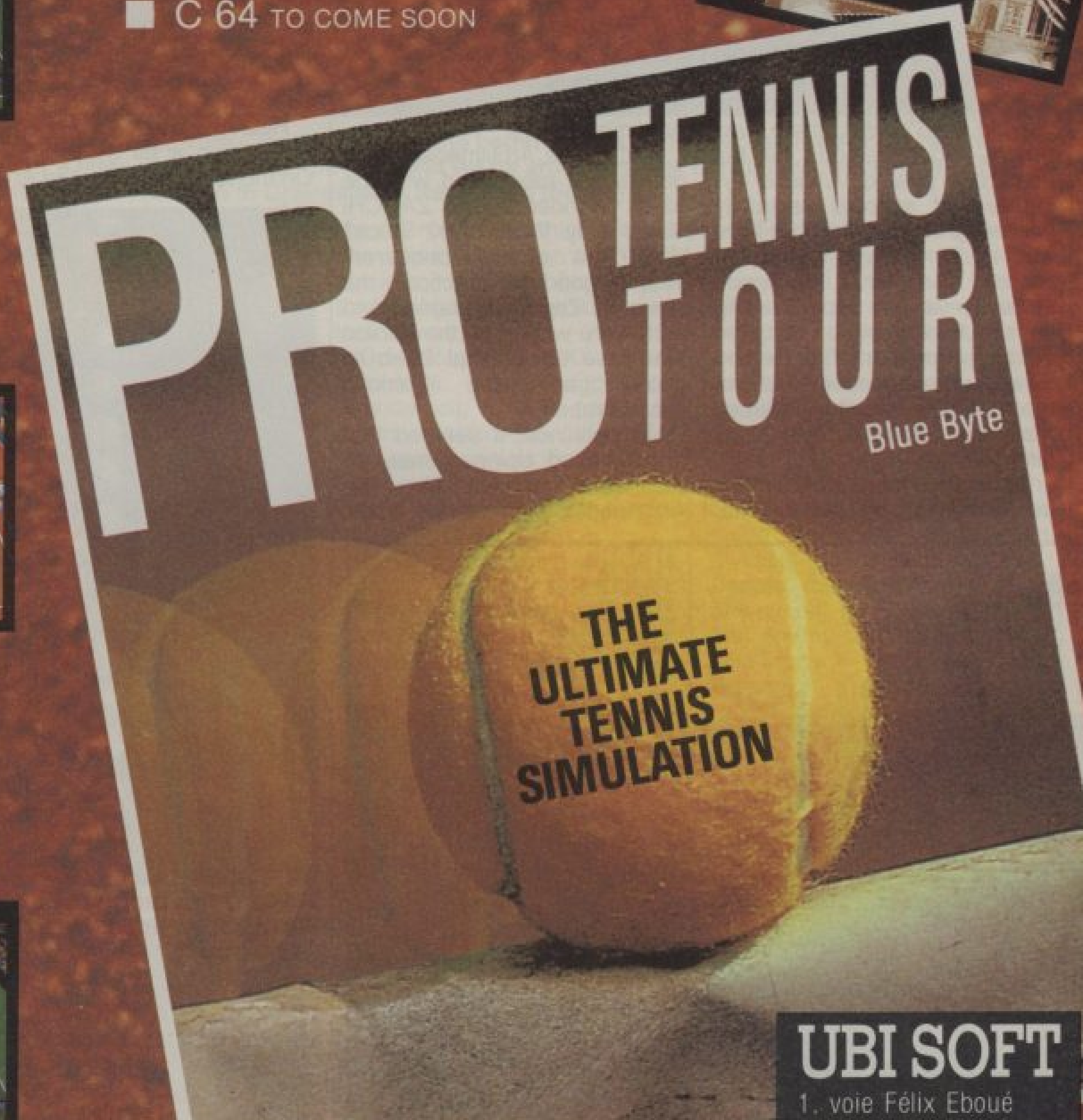


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Eureka! Eureka!

With the recent release of the new Acorn A3000 at just £750, 32-bit technology comes one step nearer the games player. And with Acorn bragging the Archimedes Games Conference such a resounding success, 32-bit versions of all your favourite games could soon be a real possibility. Dominic Handy looks at the history of Acorn, the Archimedes, and their present push into the lucrative games sector.

It was way back in Issue 10 that we first looked at a clutch of Archimedes games. Then, the overall feeling was of disappointment. It seemed like games producers for the Archie had taken a step back in time — had they become stuck in a loop known as Electron emulation?

But how could this be? After all, we're taking about the machine that produced Zarch. The game that did for sales of the Archimedes what Elite did for the BBC B. But what other games can you remember on the old BBC? Well, there was Frak! — only famous for the numerous pirated versions flying around schools (tastefully hacked to reveal what our hero was really saying) — and, of course, the other Acornsoft game, Revs — a superb racing car simulator, yet to be matched on any computer. The Repton series was very popular, but can those Boulderdash-type games really be called classics? No, I think not.

Basically, there were few masterpieces on the Beeb, most games were simply-programmed clones of more-popular games on more-popular computers. That's not to say the BBC didn't sell in vast quantities. Nearly every school in the country had at least one. The machine just wasn't popular amongst the general public, though. Even with numerous price drops, the BBC B never challenged the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and, later on, the Amstrad. So, not very surprisingly, Acorn's next machine was to be aimed solely at the educational/business. Cue the Archimedes.

And to the Archimedes, what games are associated with the 32-bit wonder-beast? ZARCH! Yeah, okay. What else? Stuck? Well, how about Conquerer? Yes, it's good, but practically the same as Zarch with tanks. And both were written by the person that gave the original Beeb its classic game, the illustrious David Braben.

Up until now it seemed that no-one liked doing games for the Acorn machines. Even the Archimedes was, like the Beeb, cursed with poor defender clones, inferior missile command games and loads of puzzle games. But why? Simple — Acorn wasn't pushing the machine as a games computer, so, presumably they thought people buying it wouldn't appreciate a good game if it blew up their joystick (not that many owners bought joysticks at £25 a throw). Cue the A3000.

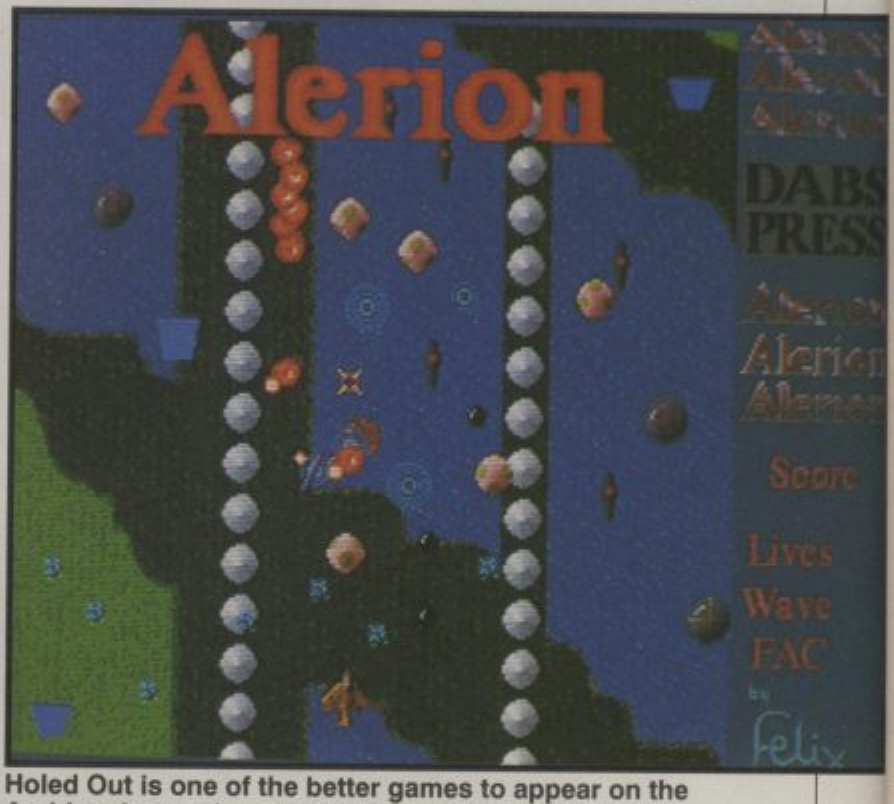
The ultimate games machine?

Launched in July of this year, it seems that with the A3000 (£747.44) Acorn have the ultimate 32-bit computer. At almost twice the price of the Amiga, the A3000 may seem like an awful lot of money. But we're talking 32-bit here, with better sound and graphics than an Amiga and a full one megabyte of memory. Another look at the utilities available for it soon reveal that the Archie 3000 is not so overpriced after all. In fact it's tremendously good value for money.

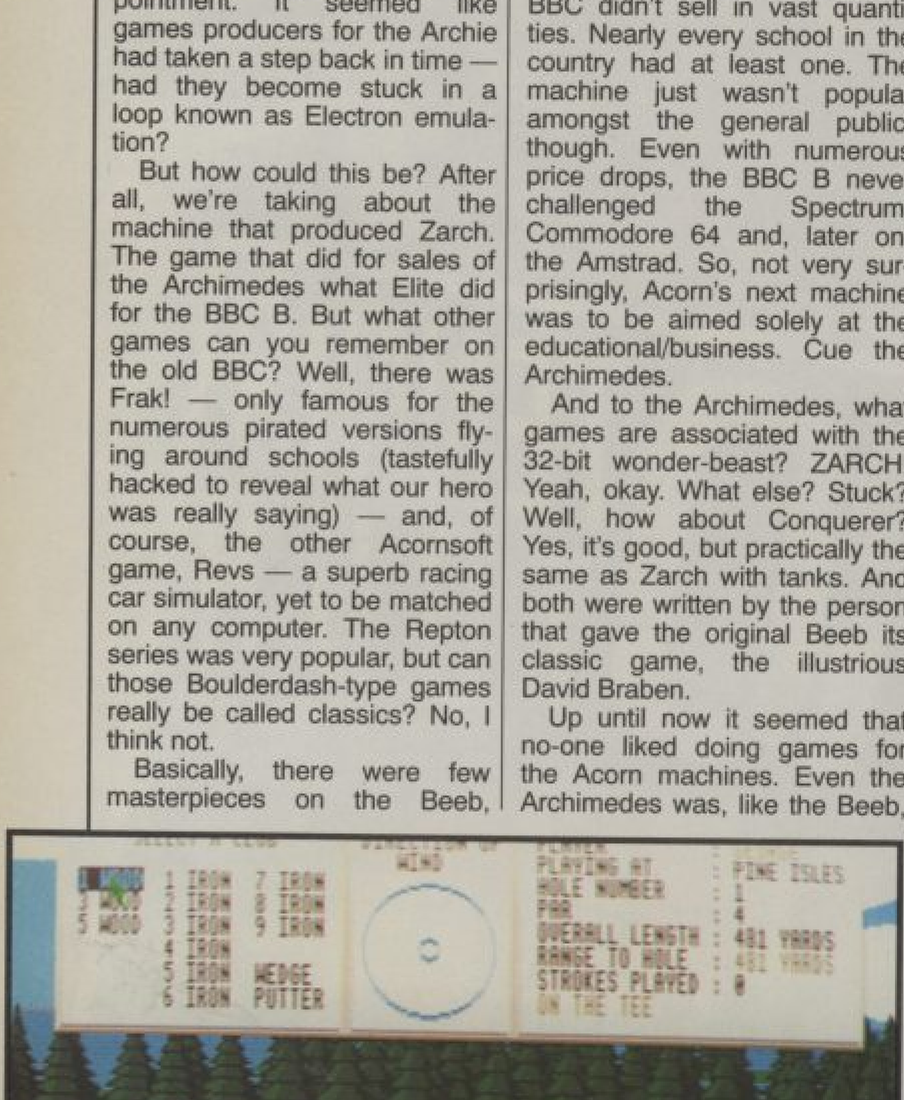
However, the A3000 seems to have been a bit misconceived. On the technical side, the Archie will not connect up to an ordinary household television. Nor can you plug in a standard Atari-compatible nine-pin joystick. Sound is not naturally pushed out through the monitor, nor is there any easy way to get a decent stereo output (the inbuilt speaker is not very acceptable). So what? All machines have their own technical quirks (look at the Spectrum), what about Acorn encouraging software developers? That, again, is very strange.

Most hardware producers at least consult the software producers before launching their product — not Acorn, though. Even MGT, after many months of indecisiveness, have come to the conclusion that their machine cannot live on educational/enthusiast sales alone. Anyway, who are these enthusiasts? Amiga and ST owners aren't dubbed enthusiasts, although they're just as 'enthusiastic' about their computers as MSX and Aquarius owners. Perhaps they really mean: 'We know we're not going to sell many but it's a bloody good computer, and some duffer, somewhere, will pay the asking price... Whassat? Software support from big companies encouraging better sales? Nah, we're not aiming for that market.' Yeah, sure...

Ironically, a few weeks after its launch, someone at Acorn decided that the A3000 was actually a decent computer after all. And, despite it coming from Acorn, it really was a good marketing move. Trouble is, isn't it a bit too late to change the campaign and start calling it the ultimate 'games' machine now? Acorn thought not. For just six weeks after its launch, the big cheeses at Acorn thought is would be a good wheeze if they got all the major software hous-



Holed Out is one of the better games to appear on the Archimedes, and soon to be joined by the prolific Leaderboard



Just another one of the 'Electron emulation' games that Archimedes owners have come to expect over the years

es together and organised a Games Conference. Most were invited, some turned up, and a few promised they'd do a game or two. Nothing new, you understand, just a conversion of something they'd already planned to do. And, as for others, well no-one's saying at the moment. 'We'll just wait and see.'

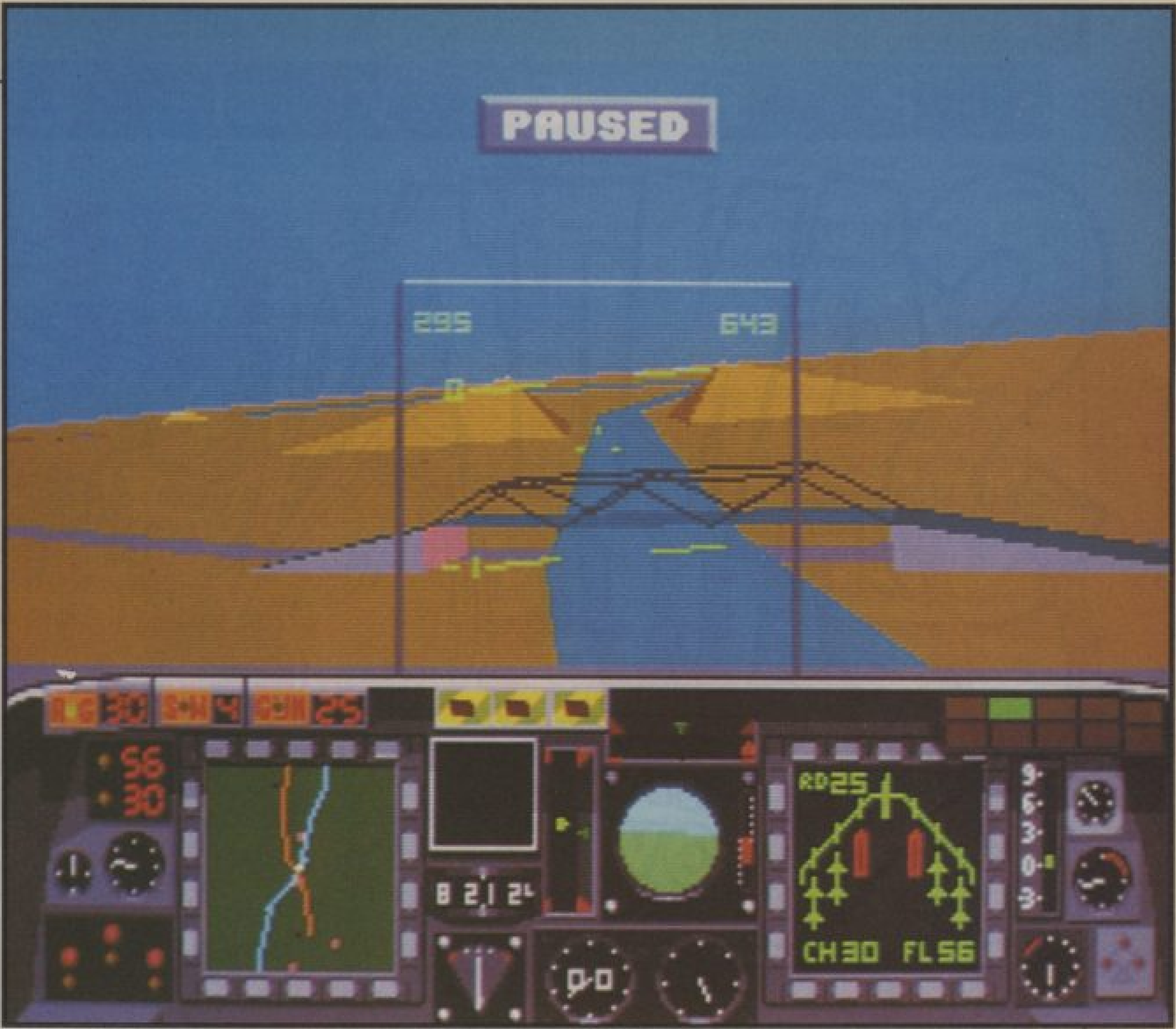
But this is nothing new. Around six month's ago, Grandslam 'tested' the market with two conversions of their 16-bit hits, Terramex and Pac-Mania. And so how did they sell?

'Well, let's just say that we'll sell more on compilation than we did on single sales,' says a Grandslam spokesman. But why did they release product on the Archimedes anyway? No other major software house had. 'It was a new machine, we liked the specification, and thought — and still do think — that it's a great computer.' And will we see anymore Grandslam games? 'No. Not unless we think it's going to be cost effective to produce them.' Pity, their versions of Terramex and Pac-Mania were the best on any machine.

But what about the other software houses? It seems that they're oblivious to all the shocks and sales figures that Grandslam received. After all, Grandslam produced the best games in their genre for the Archie and they still didn't sell enough. Have the software houses been suckered into producing games just because of its flash graphics and 32-bit capabilities? Partly.

At Acorn's recent Games Conference, all the top software houses turned up: Virgin Mastertronic, Domark, Activision, Ocean... But where were the Birmingham giants, the mighty US Gold? US Gold's software development manager, Dave Baxter, explains: 'As it happens I was elsewhere on that day. But, anyhow, we started developing product for the Archimedes over six months ago. We didn't turn up with all the other big guns just to score brownie points, we were committed before all the hype.'

So what is US Gold's commitment to the Archie? Dave continues: 'We're just about to release Leaderboard for it. Interestingly enough it's programmed in a high-level language.' What?! Not BASIC, as Zarch was rumoured to be? 'No, not actually BASIC, but another high-level language. It's probably the best version, anyway, and if it was any faster it would be unplayable.' But is it better than The Fourth Dimension's Holed Out? That really impressed the TGM crew. 'Oh, yeah, much better.' Of course.



Interdictor (above, from Clares) is one of the better games to be seen on the Archie recently, but is it a taste of things to come — or will we be stuck with the unoriginal conversions of 16-bit classics, as seen in Grandslam's Pac-Mania (below)?

But what about other conversions? Anything else lined up for the coming year? 'We'll probably be doing Sphericule and might even do a conversion of California Games. It's really easy to convert from a 16-bit computer to an Archie — although, not as easy as ST to Amiga.' So we might see even more US Gold games on the A3000? 'Well, we've got to see how Leaderboard sells first. But, of course, it's a possibility. We like to support all the popular machines.'

Domark are also trying out the Archie 3000 market. First from the Domark boys should be Trivial Pursuit — probably the ideal computer game for an Archie-owning yuppie. With that out and on the streets, Domark are turning their undoubted skills to an Archimedes version of their potential Christmas hit,



Hard Drivin'. 'We think it'll run four times faster than the 16-bit versions,' they say. Now that's something every yuppie should look forward to.

Ocean's probable Christmas number one, Operation Thunderbolt, is also rumoured for the Archimedes touch. But then again so was Batman and The Untouchables. The official word from Ocean is that they're 'still thinking about.'

Virgin Mastertronic are in a similar position to Ocean. However, all they will say is that, 'yes, it's a great machine' and they may do a small pilot project for it in the future.

Whereas others, like Activision and Hewson, feel they will only produce for it when it becomes successful, and not before.

On the other side of the spectrum there are a few software companies dedicated to producing games and numerous utilities for the Archie. One such company is the Cheshire-based firm of Clares. Renowned for various utilities on both the Beeb and Archimedes (not least ProArtisan, reviewed in Centre Bytes this issue), Clares have now entered the lucrative market of the games producer.

As Clare's first game, Interdictor leaves other pretentious flying simulators air miles behind. While other flight sims seem fast, with few frames being used, Clares' Archie sim effortlessly throws all sorts of polygons at you, with no flicker, jerk or graphics break-up whatsoever. As the name suggests, you have to fly up a river destroying all the bridges that cross it, thus cutting off the enemy's communication. Subsequently, this involves much low-level flying which gives a real feeling of speed. Barges rush underneath you, anti-aircraft guns shoot at you, and enemy fighters zoom past your wings — it's tremendously playable.

The impressive thing about Interdictor is that you don't feel like you're playing a computer game — all the flying actions soon become second nature. At £35, it may seem a large outlay for a computer game but when you consider the capabilities of Jet and the fact that it cost £40, Interdictor is practically a giveaway.

Zarch, Conquerer and now Interdictor. Now there's three good reasons (excuses?) to buy an Archimedes.

For a technical overview of the Archimedes, and a review of ProArtisan, turn to Centre Bytes now!

OUR MAN IN JAPAN

Bat-fever has finally hit the Far Eastern shores of Japan, which might account for the odd habits of the inhabitants (below). This month, TGM's Japanese correspondent, Shintaro Kanaoya, updates the UK on the few console releases around, and looks forward to a Christmas conversion extravaganza...



Photographs by Shintaro Kanaoya

BATMAN. Now there's a way to start a column. For all you PC Engineers in Britain, the game of the film of the T-shirt of the badges of the comic book is going to leap onto Engine screens in a more or less simultaneous release with the film, which opens in Japan on December 2nd.

The game is being produced by Sunsoft, and if you haven't heard of them before you're not alone. The only thing that I can ever remember Sunsoft doing was a conversion of Fantasy Zone on the Nintendo. Good conversion of a terrible game, though. However, Batman looks like it has captured all the dark and involving atmosphere of the film, with gameplay, hopefully, up to the standard of the Prince soundtrack.

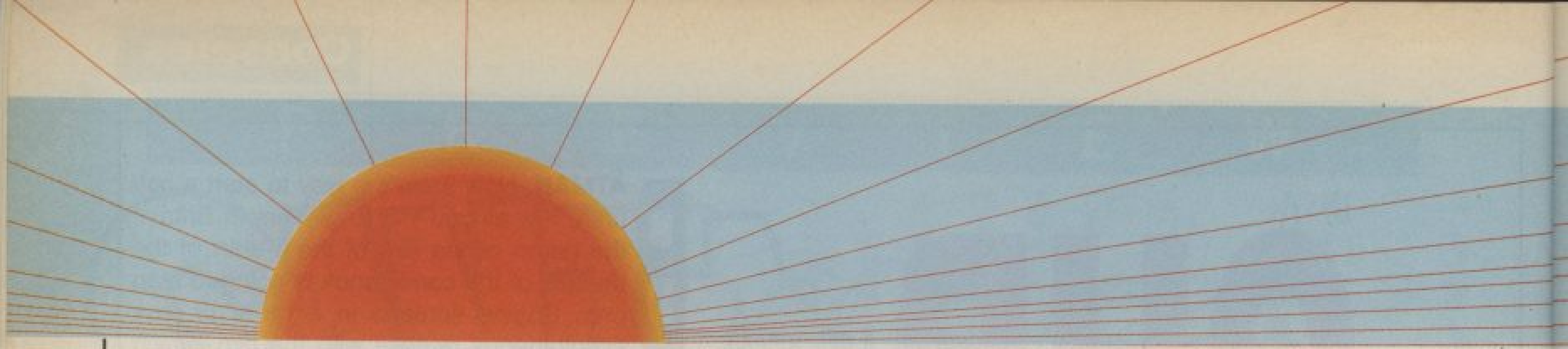
Remember the Batcave and all those TV screens? Well that's now become the stage selection screen with glorious technicoloured graphics. The actual game will be an action one, horizontally-scrolling beat-'em-up, no doubt. Still, it all goes towards the Jack 'let's make £90 million' Nicholson charity, so I feel that it's worthy cause to help a poor young actor, currently down on his luck.

Staying with the PC Engine, Power Drift looks like it's coming on nicely, the conversion is being handled by Asmic (you haven't heard of them either?). Coming on a four-meg card, it's set to leave the starting post in December. (It's the way I tell 'em.)

Recently, there seems to be a trend to release games on ROM card and then release a superior version of the game on CD-ROM. Actually, the only company doing this is NEC Avenue, who release nothing but arcade conversions — in the hope that one day you can have a complete arcade in your living room. Anyhow, Side Arms is the latest game to be CD-ised after the card version came out in Japan a few months back. (Check out the TGM guys' review of that version this issue.)

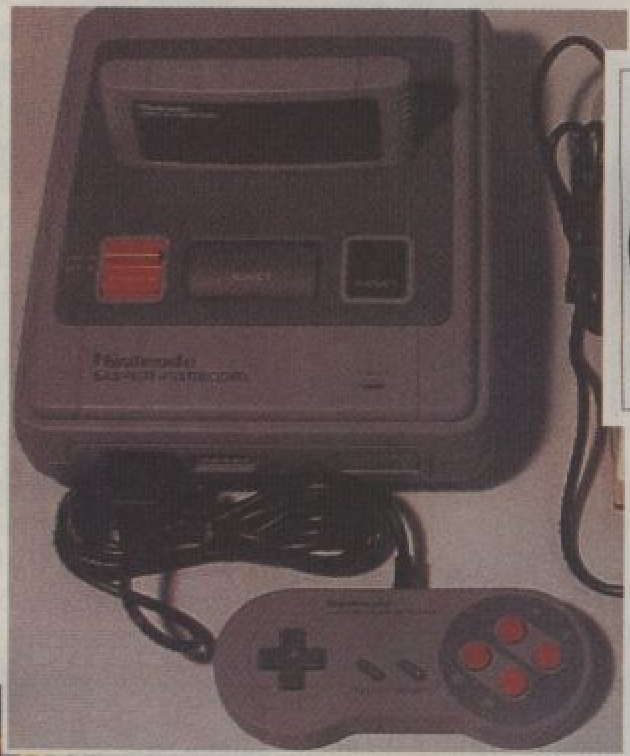
This new, improved version contains the original arcade version and the card version for roughly the same price. It's a clever, if not well disguised, plan to get people to buy CD-ROM units. Looking through the prices that those units sell for in Britain — over £300 — this plan by NEC may seem to a little hopeful to you in Britain. However, while going around discount electrical stores, I've seen them for about £150 pounds, which, with a little saving of pocket money (it's a Japanese custom to give children money at New Year), puts it within the reach of many people. To tell the truth, a lot of people have gone

PRESS ANY KEY



Here it is, in the flesh, so to speak — Nintendo's 16-bit Super Famicon. But you'll have to wait, because it's not due for release, even in Japan, until next summer, which is long wait for Japanese joycard freaks, let alone British ones.

Red carpet treatment: the Tokyo arcades (below) look a bit smarter and more upmarket than most of their European counterparts, but the rattle of disappearing Yen is as noisy — almost as noisy as the baseball fans in the stadium. Even here you can't get away from video games; what is that woman on the screen trying to sell...?









out and bought one to play just one game: Tengaimakyo. But you can call it Far East of Eden, which is the title of the book upon which the game is based. Yes, it is an RPG, and as many of you know, I have pathological hatred of these things (apart from Dungeon Master). However, Far East of Eden is actually a darn good game and the whole of Japan seems to think so, too. Allow me to explain.

In one of Japan's now-rising number of PC Engine magazines, there is a 500-people reader poll which asks how this bunch of people rate certain games — quality of translation, value for money, how good the control method is, addictive qualities, etc, as well as the basic graphics and sound ratings. Up to now, R-Type 1 was in the lead for about a year — the placing of games being decided by the total number of points scored from each category.

However, as of last month, this reign of the popularity charts was crushed by Far East of Eden. Its popularity is not just because of its hype and one-year delay, however. It is actually a stylish, fun and compelling RPG.

Merry Christmas

One of the game's major plus points is the music. Some of you may have heard of a musician called Sakamoto Ryuichi. He did all the music for the British POW film with David Bowie called Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence. His music was a beautiful accompaniment for the film — incredibly evocative and haunting. But how did he get involved in a computer game?

About three years ago, he popped into Hudson Soft, the producers of Far East of Eden, and said that he'd like to compose some computer music.

Unfortunately, the Nintendo was the big thing at the time, and with its three-channel sound he felt that he couldn't express his music clearly enough with such equipment.

When CD-ROM came along, Hudson gave him a call and the result is magical. Although you'll probably never get to hear any of it, I would wholeheartedly recommend Mr Lawrence to anyone who appreciates good instrumental music. And no hint of Stock, Aitken and Waterman...

You've bought your Sega, played on the Nintendo, broken your PC Engine, ridden in a Nissan Bluebird and gotten drunk on saki. So you think you know a little bit about Japan, well let us enlighten you. Here's the definitive guide to the streets of Japan from Shintaro Kanaoya...

Beautiful Japan

As TGM's roving and raving Japanese reporter, it suddenly occurred to me that few of you know the 'real' Japan. So, doing my bit for international relations, I decided to wander around some of Japan's less publicised areas; ie, not the urban jungle or red light district.

I went to Mount Fuji, Japan's highest mountain and currently a resting volcano, which proves that there is *real* greenery in Japan, that it's not just rising tower blocks, and that behind Japan's economic miracle there is a very real and very beautiful Japan to be seen, full of legends, fairy tales and automatic vending machines for fortune-telling at Buddhist shrines. I personally find this distressing and if this is the price Japan has to pay for a rich, capitalist, monetary success then I think it's time to re-evaluate our position. Then again, to hell with the values and give us more money.

Getting back to computers, you may or may not be interested to know that there is now a PC (of the IBM-compatible sort) with a built-in PC Engine. Handy for lunchbreaks, and, at the flick of a switch, back to spreadsheets and databases: 'Err, no boss, we were just checking the relevant power factor data on an R-Type drone, honest boss.'

Y not?

Many of you may have heard of a game by Activision called Might & Magic. Well, that's shortly to appear on the Engine, as is Download, a cyberpunk shoot-'em-up.

Sega owners may have raved over Y's, which is now out on the Nintendo, as well as on various PCs, but PC Engine owners will now be able to play both Y's 1 and 2 when the CD-ROM version is released later this year. (Well, they have to find something to do with all those megabytes.)

The Nintendo 16-bit Super Famicom: fact or fiction? Well, both, depending on your point of view. In the hope of allaying some rumours I'd been hearing that this supposed super-console's release date was to be delayed, I decided to use my finely-tuned journalistic skills to call Nintendo and ask what the hell was going on. Having been put on hold with a Muzak version of 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' blaring into my ear, I had this immense fear that all those rumours about it not coming out until the end of the year were true.

As soon as I heard the guy tell me that it would be coming out in summer, I breathed a sigh of relief: one, maybe two, months to wait. But when he said summer of 1990, I nearly dropped off my tatami (Japanese mat — Ed). Yup folks, summer 1990, July to be exact — and that's at the earliest.

I hear your console-hungry British mouths shouting, why? Well, it's the same old problem, chips. Remember the Atari ST price rise of two years ago due to shortage of chips? Same thing here, except this time there is a REAL shortage. There are no chips, whatsoever. Having been plummeted to the bottom of the pit of despair, the man at Nintendo, nice guy, very polite, tells me that they actually have an up and running Super Famicom there, upstairs. Then he says that Super Mario Brothers 4, which is one of the games to be released simultaneously, is absolutely awesome.

For the family

Many of you may not know why this nearly had me on the verge of ritual suicide; the 16-bit Super Famicom is about to be THE console of the Nineties. For those of you that didn't read the TGM exclusive all about it in Issue 17, dig it out or get a back issue now (thinly-veiled commercial plug). What wasn't mentioned however is that the sound chip, which is going to be 'well awesome', is, in fact, a joint product of Nintendo and those masters of quality sound, Sony. So I guess that the rather optimistic idea of a UK release in 1990 isn't just optimistic, it's practically impossible.

There is, however, some incentive to keep us waiting till at least next year: the games. As mentioned above, Mario 4 will be one of the games released, as will Zelda 3 (Zeldas 1 and 2 being huge successes in both Japan and the US), Dragonfly (arcadeish flight sim) and an as-yet-unspecified racing or sports game. Well, as the old Japanese proverb says, 'It's no use moaning, you gotta get on with your life.' (Our's were never as good as the Chinese's.)

So what are the plans for this wonder machine? Well, Britain is, for now, nowhere in the picture. Not even the USA features in any plans for an overseas release. Is this the biggest misunderstanding of consumer demand ever or are they simply trying to make it in Japan first? Admittedly, they want to make it a success in Japan first but they must surely have their sights set for America and Europe sometime. If they don't release any in Britain, surely they will have 'unofficial' machines selling, as has happened with the PC Engine.

Apparently not. For all would-be importers and modifiers, take note: 'the sound and visual chips would have to be altered or changed for the Super Famicom to work on a PAL system'. And, as mentioned before, the sound chip isn't going to be easy to change. So if you want a Super Famicom — and you should — be prepared to wait a few years.

Giants face up

How do Nintendo see the other 16-bit machine, the Sega Mega Drive? Well, not really as any sort of threat. Quoting me some figures of how many Mega Drives had sold since its release, I could see why. 400,000 was the approximate answer, only 100,000 more than what Nintendo hope to sell every month.

This isn't the only reason they see the Mega Drive as no competition. Graphically and sonically, the Mega Drive is comparable to the 8-bit PC Engine. Nintendo want the Super Famicom to be the next step up from the 8-bit Nintendo, not a mere half-step up as the Mega Drive seems to be. The amazing thing is, it looks as though Nintendo will succeed, evén with the late

PRESS ANY KEY



We leave as we came in, with the Caped Crusader hurtling around the streets and roofscapes of Gotham City as depicted on the PC Engine. NEC had an almost arcade-like stand (bottom) at the recent Yokohama Exotic Showcase exhibition, which also featured Star Wars robot extras confronting Live Circuit-type electronic monsters (below) in a tableau to thrill the onlookers.

start. Still with Nintendo, but moving away from the depressing news of the Super Famicom, the Game Boy — that cute, lovable black and white, hand-held game thingy (okay, so the American Atari Lynx looks a bit better) — has actually sold out in both Japan and America.

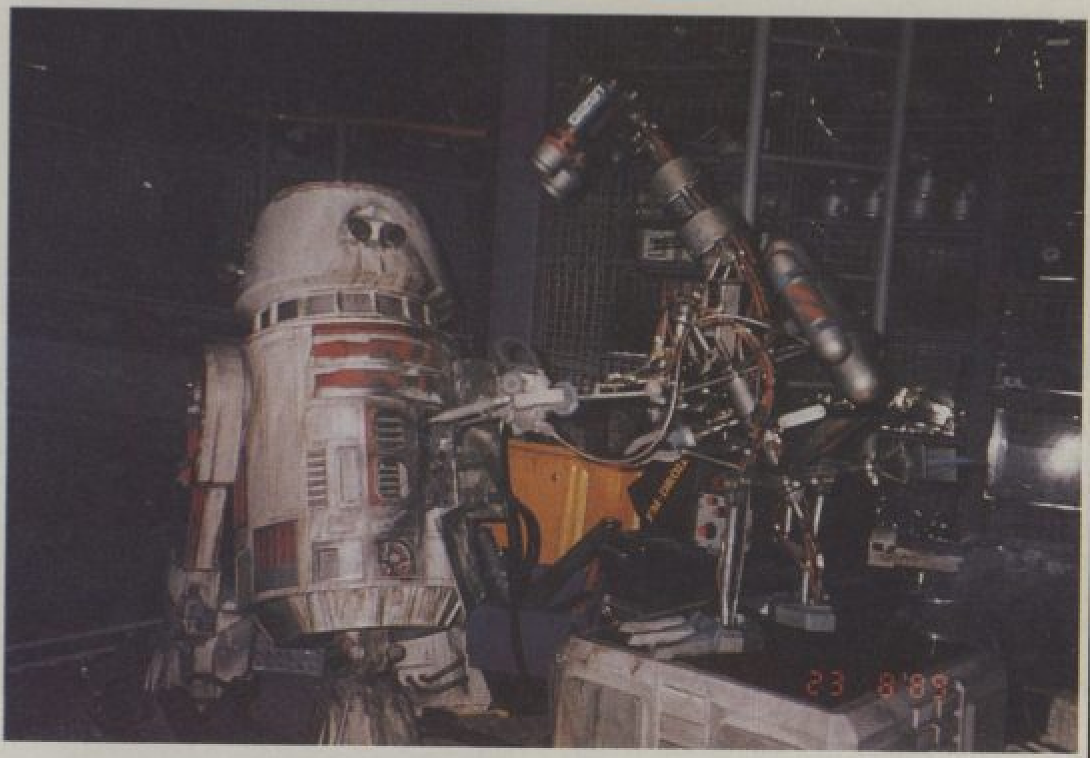
Good news for Nintendo, who have been under all sorts of attacks from Atari, after being accused of restrictive practises on the NES, and then Tengen (formerly a subsidiary of Atari) getting Nintendo into court over the Game Boy version of the Russian puzzle game, Tetris. Different sorts of Atari, but all the same American hassle, as usual. Some people never forget Pearl Harbour...

Cast your mind back a few years, when the 8-bit Nintendo was about to destroy the British home computer industry. When everyone was about to chuck their Spectrums and C64s away. You don't remember it? That's because it never happened.

Nope, Nintendo, who were expected to continue their domination of the world home computer market, came to a bitter end in Britain. And Nintendo know exactly who was to blame. And the winner is... Mattel. Yes, Mattel, who had the distribution rights to what could have been the biggest market penetration since the joystick.

So what do Nintendo think caused Mattel's legendary screw up? Just two things. Inexperience in the field. Although they had released the Intellivision a few years back, it didn't prove to be enough knowledge. And the other, motivation. They couldn't really be bothered if it sold or not, or perhaps they didn't realise how good the machine they had was.

Whatever the reason, Nintendo know who not to use to distribute the Super Famicom, when, and if, it gets released in Britain. So, until then, all you can do is wait indefinitely, while I wait till next summer. You see, there are some advantages to living in a concrete jungle... Sayonara.





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HEWSON

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Collect icons to gain extra power. Bound over star-spangled black-holes to avoid being suspended, forever lost in inner space.



TOMORROW'S WHIRLED

In this three-part SPECIAL ANALYSIS, Mel Croucher examines the shape of things to come according to the people that have the power to change the future of computing. Part One offers their hardware predictions.

The future ain't what it used to be! Anyone stuck in a 1985 timewarp and looking at the state of today's computer biz as we head for the 1990s would see the same old titles and most of the same old machines still exerting a stranglehold on the market. Certain UK companies have already gone public by putting their money where their predictions are: sticking with 8-bit, opting for 16-bit, embracing consoles, or dismissing anything that doesn't run in BASIC as a flash in Japan.

Domark is an outfit rarely shy of speaking out, and I asked Dominic Wheatley for his comments on future hardware trends, starting with those sexy little consoles.

DOMINIC: Consoles! I hate 'em! Don't you hate 'em? I wish the Japanese would just bugger off and let us be forward-looking publishers instead of bloody developers. Now ask me about the future of CD-ROM.

MEL: What about the future of CD-ROM?

DOMINIC: Don't know the first thing about it, hahaha! You're the expert, you tell me! I look forward to seeing it, it sounds great, what's this in my cheek? Good God, it's a large tongue. CD-ROM, no idea! Next question.

MEL: Is 8-bit terminally sick, or does it just smell funny?

DOMINIC: 8-bit will fade in civilised countries like Great Britain. It will continue to breed a while longer in the uncivilised world like Latin America and Europe, but here at home 8-bit will cease to attract original product and become a budget market only.

MEL: Are you saying that anyone with an 8-bit machine can look forward to no original titles in the future?

DOMINIC: Exactly. It will all be coin-op licences and tie-ins.

MEL: Like your own James Bond?

DOMINIC: Hahaha! Yes, like James Bond. 16-bit is where the original product will appear.

MEL: How will hardware be used by the end of the century? After all, very little has changed in actual use over the last ten years.

DOMINIC: We don't play cricket in the streets anymore because there are too many bloody juggernauts. We don't even go to the pub so much, and the cinema is finished. It's all home-based entertainment now, and by the year 2000 it can only go one way. Home-based interactive video entertainment. Sport, film, fantasy, simulators, education; all at home, all computer-based. There is absolutely no alternative, old boy.

Mirrorsoft's Jim MacKonochie does not share Mr Wheatley's attitude towards CD-ROM.

JIM: I believe that an optical disc medium will become world standard at some time in the next five years.

MEL: Can you be more specific, Jim, we've had this conversation several times over the last five years.

JIM: Alright. I think that there will be two standards, definitely launched within three years. There will be a scramble for the market share, confusion as always, and by the year five there will be a definite trend. We believe that optical disc technology is much bigger than a games market for teenagers.

MEL: Talk to me about the PC Engine.

JIM: Huh, we're all aware of the NEC PC Engine, and the CD-ROM drive, which is about the size of a Sony Walkman to go with the PC Engine...

MEL: Welcome to the future my friends...

JIM: In their market research of the CD-ROM database in Japan, 56% of PC Engine

owners say that they will buy a CD-ROM add-on by the end of the year.
MEL: So NEC are going to double the installed CD-ROM drive base in the space of four months, singlehandedly?
JIM: Yes. At the moment it can only be connected to the NEC PC Engine, one can only hope that they will start marketing a CD-ROM drive with an IBM PC-interface card, which will reduce the price of existing CD-ROM drives to 10% of what they are now.
MEL: To sum up..?
JIM: Optical disc technology will arrive within five years. With high-quality graphics and high-quality audio you have to rethink the entire product, but we are going to concentrate on vertical markets where we know there is a return for our investment...
MEL: Will creativity lead technology? Or will we just be rehashing the same old ideas?
JIM: We could never have imagined how far these old computers would be stretched when we started out. If you compare where we are today with the history of the movie industry, I think we're still at the pre-talkie stage. Personally, I am going to concentrate of bringing computer entertainment to the equivalent of today's wide-screen movies!

Paul Cooper runs the small (but perfectly formed) Thalamus.
MEL: Some say 8-bit is dead. Others that 16-bit will never happen, others are going for CD-ROM. What do you reckon?
PAUL: There's plenty of mileage in 8-bit yet. Plenty. Yeah, 16-bit is here, but anyone who writes off 8-bit is living on another planet. As for CD-ROM, don't make me laugh! Are we talking about the future of computer entertainment for the kids or the megabucks of the US military?
MEL: Yet some members of the UK computer industry have already got into CD-ROM.
PAUL: What industry? You know as well as me what profits are around in this so-called industry. We do alright because our products are good and our overheads are low, and we stick to what we know.
MEL: So you won't be getting into consoles?
PAUL: Consoles are going to be big business in a small industry, but they will shove us into the past instead of taking us into the future. The titles and gameplays are antique.
MEL: Do you think that the time is ripe for the launch of a new type of machine?
PAUL: Yeah. A chainsaw!

I spoke to three members of the family who are Code Masters at a Mayfair bash, awash with champagne and salmonella-free buffet, starting with the Daddy of them all, Mr Jim Darling.
JIM: I think the 16-bit market, the Amigas and STs are only ever going to be a specialist market. You're never going to get the big numbers there. In the UK, we've also got a declining 8-bit market, so what's going to happen next? I suppose it's the Nintendos and Segas, the PC Engines, maybe Konix-type machines filling up little gaps in the market. Code Masters are definitely looking towards the future of consoles.
MEL: Imagine it's ten years into the future. What will we have then?
JIM: I can remember talking about a Konix-type machine ten years ago, and it's only just happening now! It saddens me a bit to think that we might be dominated by the Japanese in the future. When I first saw the Nintendo three years back, I thought it was a terrible bloody thing, with rubbish games, all going nowhere. The only reason it's working now is the financial backing Nintendo can give it. Millions every year. Maybe I'll stick to predicting what's going to happen in ten weeks time, not ten years!
MEL: Does the Darling family lock itself in a room and thrash out future predictions?
JIM: No. It comes out naturally, over breakfast, in the car. We're still a family business, don't forget. When I look back over the last few years, all the important decisions have come from David or Richard, not me. They're the ones to ask about the future.
MEL: OK, fill my glass and lead me to David Darling. Now then, young sir, what do you reckon is going to be the Next Big Thing?

DAVID: Well, the idea of games computers is going to change. People will use computers without even realising it, just like granny does now when she uses a washing machine that's controlled by a chip. Computers will become invisible. In the long term, you'll be able to step right into a machine to play games, but it'll be invisible, like wearing a set of contact lenses. Your whole vision and hearing will be taken over by the game, and you will become whoever you want, like a racing driver or, um...
MEL: Rambo?
DAVID: Maybe you shouldn't want to become Rambo, but that's how it's going to go. Computer gaming still isn't a big industry, but as soon as the really big companies move in with CD-ROMs and so on, the total fantasy thing will happen very fast. They're not putting the resources into it yet.
MEL: So what's the Next Big Thing, if not CD-ROM?
DAVID: I suppose it'll be consoles for two or three years, and we'll have to wait seven or eight for fantasy simulators.
MEL: I don't think I can wait that long, I feel half dead now...
DAVID: But it will take that long. Eight years ago, everyone thought that things would keep evolving really fast, but it just hasn't happened. You've got to get mass volume machines at less than £200 to make it work, I'm sure that's the cut-off price for the home market.
MEL: What are Code Masters going to be doing in the future?
DAVID: Haha! Ask Richard.
MEL: Your wish is my command, let's talk to brother Richard Darling.

RICHARD: We'll stick with low-priced software for most of our 8-bit stuff.
MEL: And what else?
RICHARD: Well, there's our 16-bit and PC titles, but I don't see that as a major part of our business. Our job is to stick with the base-level machines and keep turning out the entertainment.
MEL: What about consoles?
RICHARD: Consoles are going to do well, people don't really like keyboards and typing in a load of old guff. I agree with David, machines will become invisible in the end. We'll be experiencing complete fantasies using something like sunglasses, with LCD screens and headphones built in.

Clem Chambers, the man who gave the world CRL, leans back in his chair, falls off it, fires it, invents a new one and gets ready to impart words of wisdom.
MEL: You've got one minute to tell me the future of computer hardware over the next two years.
CLEM: Easy! Consoles will get stronger, but not a lot. I reckon 8-bit machines will get stronger, but slowly. Piracy will get a hell of a lot worse. CD-I will flop, straight down the toilet! The biggest surprise is that there's going to be some new machine that takes off, the time is dead right for that.
MEL: The SAM Coupe?
CLEM: Who knows. All I'm saying is that the time is right. Can I mention software?
MEL: No. Oh, alright then, what's the future of games software? CLEM: Same old shit, I expect.
MEL: Thank you, succinct as ever, Mr Chambers. How about hardware in five year's time?
CLEM: Aha! There will be a different delivery system, play-by-modem, satellite, cable, that's what I'm interested in. You can meet people, gossip, fight, bonk, do anything you want in an on-line game, that's the future: interactive multi-player alternative realities.
MEL: But won't most people still prefer to go down the pub and gossip, grope and fight for real?
CLEM: No. I'm talking about 'Data Space'. You can do anything in Data Space, it's better than the real world. There are players right now who have two lives; the boring, grimy real one, and the freedom of total fantasy for four, five hours a night in Data Space. I can meet 20 women a night in Data Space.
MEL: What about programmers of the future?
CLEM: Won't exist! It'll be just like the music industry now. You don't have to know how to wire up an amplifier or play the piano or drums, all you do is use a bank of machines, all different but all working together. Writing computer games will be just like that. It isn't technical knowledge of programming that's vital, it's imagination. You proved that back in the early Eighties, you told me you knew bugger all about programming but your stuff was years ahead of everything else.
MEL: Flattery, as usual, will get you anywhere.

Next month, we take up Clem Chambers' idea of the extinction of programmers, and see what the future of software has in store.



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Robin Candy's PLAYING TIPS

I think it's dark and it looks like rain. So much for summer huh? It's always the same. You get a nice stretch of sunny days arrange for sometime off work and then what? It's winter. And Woolworths runs out of wotsits, typical! Due to new schedules (we have to start planning for christmas months in advance) it's only a few weeks since I wrote the last tips column. Most of that time has been spent sitting on Leominster train station or being annoyed by baked beans (ever heard one tell a funny joke?). Sad news this month is the departure of part-time drinking, eating and staggering home partner and occassional advertising sales executive Lee 'a chip off the ole tooth' Watkins to pursue a full-time career of drinking, eating and staggering home at Leicester Polytechnic. But you're not interested in him so on with the tips...

New Zealand Story
(C64)

Kendal May, Faversham
While on the title screen type in 'TRY CHEATING' (including the space) and the border should turn grey. When you start the game you will have infinite lives and you can jump to the next level by just pressing the back arrow key.

Super Mario Bros 2
(Nintendo)

Here's the final installment of the Super Mario Bros 2 solution. While the tips over the last couple of months have shown how to complete the game they don't reveal all of its secrets. The game is full of concealed passages and hidden extra lives which you'll have to discover for yourselves.

World 5-1
Use Princess. Go right, drop down, go left, kill Panser with Shyguy and go through the door. Collect the second of the top two blades of grass for a potion. Enter subspace and collect the coins. If possible use Princess in the next section otherwise you will have to cross the waterfalls on either the falling logs or the flying fish. When you come to two blades of grass collect the one on the left for an extra life. The right one contains a potion. Collect this, enter subspace and collect the mushroom. Run and jump right (don't fall down). Proceed right. When you arrive at two falling logs try to jump onto the roof. Then fall down the second chute. Collect the blade of grass farthest to your right then enter subspace and collect the mushroom. Go through the door on the right.

Defeating Ostro is now a little harder. He only shoots fireballs so you must hit him repeatedly with the same mushroom block. Go to the right and wait till he drops down. Pick up the block and throw it at him. Then jump over him and lure him away from the block. Run back, grab the block and throw it at him. Repeat this until Ostro is dead.

World 5-2
Go up the ladder and collect one of the blades of grass (but not the first one). Use it to make your way past the Hoopsters. Continue right until you find a vase. Climb into it. Pick up the blade of grass and drop a bomb to make a hole in the ground. Go down a pick the blade of grass on the right for a potion. Take it out of the vase and enter subspace. Collect the mushroom.

Continue right until you meet two Hoopsters. Climb onto their backs and cross the gap. Proceed in this manner till you come to a beanstalk. Climb the beanstalk, climbing from stalk to stalk to avoid the Hoopsters. Go through the door. Take the POW, throw it then drop down. As you fall beware of the spikes. Go through the door and kill Ostro.

World 5-3
Climb the ladder and collect the grass for a potion. Enter subspace and collect the coins. Now watching out for the Bob-Ombs head right until you find five blades of grass together. Pick the first blade of grass for a potion and enter subspace for coins and a mushroom. Continue right until you find a brick wall. Collect a Bob-Omb and throw it so that it explodes just next to it. Now collect the middle blade of grass and enter subspace. Collect the mushroom. Now collect another bomb and blow the right wall. Go down the ladder and head left. Go through the door. Pull out mushroom blocks and drop down. When you come to a screen with a pot in the middle, place a block next to it and run along them both to the left. Duck at the last minute to pass under the wall. If you can't manage this go down further and then back up on the left. Head upwards on the left. Then, when the screen widens, continue cautiously till you come to a door. Go through this. Grab yourself a flying carpet and head right until it disappears. Proceed right. You will meet

Batman
(Amiga)

Another poke from Mark Lawrence, this time for the Amiga. Just type the listing into Amiga BASIC and carry out Mark's instructions contained with in the program.

```
10 DIM CODE%(255)
20 FOR N+0 TO 151
30 READ A$:
A+VAL("&H"+A$)
40 CODE%(N)+A
50 NEXT N
60mCHEAT+VARPTR(CODE
%(0))
70 CALL CHEAT
80 REM TYPE IN THIS LIST-
ING AND SAVE FOR FUTURE
USE
90 REM INSERT BATMAN
DISK AND RUN THIS PRO-
GRAM
95 REM GAME SHOULD
LOAD AS USUAL WITH INFI-
NITE LIVES
100 DATA 41FA, 0014, 43F9,
0007, FE00, 2F09, 707F, 22D8
110 DATA 51CB, FFFC, 4E75,
70FF, 2C78, 0004, 4EAE,
FEB6
120 DATA 2200, 5280, 6700,
00A6, 4BFA, 014E, 3AFC,
0400
130 DATA 429D, 3AC1, 93C9,
4EAE, FEDA, 2ACO, 2A8D,
2B4D
140 DATA 0008, 589D, 4295,
4BFA, 00F0, 1ABC, 0005,
3B7C
150 DATA 0030, 000A, 41ED,
0038, 2B48, 0006, 41FA, 00C0
160 DATA 7000, 7200, 43FA,
00CA, 4EAE, FE44, 4A80,
6600
170 DATA 005C, 700C, 99CC,
6118, 7002, 49F9, 0007, 0000
180 DATA 610E, 45EC, 01FE,
47FA, 0026, 613A, 4EEC,
000C
190 DATA 43FA, 00C2, 22FC,
0000, 0400, 22CC, 4299, 7230
200 DATA 93C1, 3340, 001C,
3341, 0012, 4EEE, FE38, 2057
210 DATA 217C, 5354, 4152,
06CE, 317C, 5400, 06D2,
45E8
220 DATA 01CC, 47FA, 000A,
34FC, 4EF9, 248B, 4E75,
43F8
230 DATA 0560, 2F09, 22FC,
1038, 1281, 32BC, 4E75, 45F9
240 DATA 0007, 060A, 47FA,
0004, 60DC, 4278, 00EC,
223C
250 DATA 038E, 05A2, 203C,
11FC, 0000, B0FC, 4D28,
6706
260 DATA 223C, 0374, 0596,
2180, 1000, 31BC, 303C, 1006
270 DATA 4841, 2180, 1000,
31BC, 4E71, 1006, 4ED0,
7472
280 DATA 6163, 6B64, 6973,
6B2E, 6465, 7669, 6365, 0000
```



The Games Machine STAR TIPS

KULT

(All formats)

This month's Star Tips prize goes to **Lee Ellershaw** from **Blackpool** for his complete solution to Kult. The first problems to solve are the five ordeals.

THE TWINS
Item needed: the goblet.
Open the head on each serpent and go through the door leading to the Source. Inspect the fountain then press the eye to make the water flow and fill the bath. Fill the goblet then go back through the door leading to the twins. Empty the goblet in the serpent which is on the left. A die should now appear in the other serpent. Take it then put it back in the serpent on the right, the door leading to Who Will Be Saved should now unlock. Go through this door, lift all the hands and press the serpent's head on the wall. Go back to Source, fill the goblet and climb onto cube six. Empty the goblet in cube six then lift the cube. You will find a skull.

PRESENCE
Item needed: Stone Fly
Pray at the statue and enter the web. Crawl across it and give the fly to the mistress. Refuse to kiss her and give the fly to the blue spider; you will now be given a red spider. Enter Scorpian's Presence and put the spider into the open mouth of the statue. A trap door will open. Pass through the trap door to find a skull.

THE NOOSE
To see in the room use the Solar Eyes. Grab hold of the rope on the left and push the lever the platform will now fall and kill the aspirant. There is a hollow in the platform, examine it to find a skull. Press the eye to open a trap door in the wall, this will lead you to a series of passages and rooms.

THE WALL
Item needed: the dagger.
Press the arrow which is called Zone One then go through either of the doors on the left or right. Climb the step and put the dagger in the slot of the sculpted statue. Now enter the passage on the right hand side called Dead End. Put your hand in the deep cavity to find a skull.

IN THE SCORPIAN'S DE PROFUNDIS
Item needed: Rope
Wait. When a vertical column appears use the rope and lasso it. Now wait until a granite monster appears. Jump on it and take the rope. Wait. The monster will now take you across to the other side where you can pick up a skull.

Once you have collected all five skulls go to The Master's Orbit and give them to the Protozorq. The Master of Ordeals will now appear, give



you a stone egg and tell you to go to The Concourse and on to the Dreams of Slime. Do not do this. Instead go and find a Protozorq in The Ring. Psi-Shift his zapstick and kill him. Find The Concourse but do not enter. Go through the passage on the left then take the next passage on your left. You should now be facing some bars. Push the bolt and pass through the door.

You will now be in The Powers of the Abyss. Attack Deilos with extreme violence _ you must have a zapstick to do this. Search cadaver for a useful object then dive into the water and zonescan to find a passage, go through this.

Move forwards until you find a junction, take the left branch. Continuing moving forwards until you find a cavern. You will be asked to drop any weapons. Do so and tell the truth when asked about anything. Zonescan, lift the slab, take the bean and the flask.. Give the bean to the mummy. Take any weapons and leave by the left passage. Go forward, you will eventually reach a trap door. Go through it.

You will now be in The Refrectory. Take the chopper and enter the Threshold of Truth. Attack the Priestess. Put the egg in the mouth of the statue and the bars will open. Inspect the lantern. To get the statue of Saura use Psi-shift. Enter the room called In the Presence of God then enter Placating Powers. Attack the first Priestess. Use Brainwarp on Saura the High Priestess then give her the flask to drink. She will now remove her mask and reveal herself as Sci-Fi. Enter In the Presence of God and pass through the door called Sauras Repose.

Put the statue of Saura in the niche to open a trap door then put the monkey in the tunnel. Now enter In the Presence of God and wait. The Starry Wall will open. Go through the entrance and in to a room called Birth of a Divine Race.]ck the God Zorq with extreme violence. Sci-Fi will now be taken hostage by the other zorq. Use Psi-shift to close the trap-door. Use Brainwarp on the zorq. When Sci-Fi is released throw either the knife or the chopper at the zorq. You've now completed the game!

TO COMPLETE KULT WITHOUT THE FIVE SKULLS
Go into the caves and wait until an hour has passed. Go to the Master's Orbit and enter The Master's Eye. Wait until the Master of Ordeals dies then search cadaver. Take the whistle and blow it. A deep cavity in the wall will appear. Look into it and take the egg. Now carry on playing the game as if you've completed the ordeals.

Ostro. Kill him and get the crystal. Go through the mask for a confrontation with Clawgrip.

You need to hit Clawgrip five times to defeat him. He throws rocks at you in three distinct patterns. The longest throw will pass over your head and down the far hole. The middle one will hit the two brick high wall and rebound. Jump to avoid it on the rebound. Pick it up but be careful not to fall down the hole. The shortest one will rolls down the steps towards you and can be picked up quite easily. When throwing rocks at him be careful not to get hit by his next throw because he throws very frequently.

World 6-1
On this level watch out for the quick-sand. Go right and through the door at the end. Go down the fourth vase after the mushroom block. Dig down and get the key. Return to the surface and go through the door on the right. You will now meet Ostro. Kill him taking mushroom blocks and climbing to the top of the mound. Edge out as far as possible and then drop blocks on his head.

World 6-2
Go through the door. Climb on the back of the Albatross. When you see two blades of grass collect the left one and enter subspace for a mushroom. You now have to hitch a ride left and then back right from the other end, Princess helps here. Go through the door at the other side. Defeat Ostro by dropping blocks from above.

World 6-3
Go up the ladder. Now go right and through the door, try and jump over as much of the quicksand as possible. Make your way right bombing any walls that obstruct you then climb up the beanstalk. Once at the top, go right and through the door. Kill Ostro. Get the crystal and go through the mask. You will now be facing Tryclyde. To beat him jump onto the platform that is suspended in tha air and build a three block high defence wall at the end. Then collect blocks, climb on top of the wall and drop them on him.

World 7-1
Use Princess on this level if you can. Climb up then head right. Go through the door. Collect the fourth blade of grass on the right for a potion. Enter subspace and collect the mushroom and the coins. Leave room and find a bird flying left. Climb on its back. Carefully jump over any pillars that get in the way and drop off the bird's back when the screen stops scrolling between the two pillars. Collect the grass.

Head right. Then go back and forth until you are at the bottom level of the clouds. Go to the far right and power jump up to the ladder. Climb up the ladder. Eventually you will find a spark trapped by mushroom blocks. Quickly remove one of the end blocks and place it beneath a ladder. Climb on top of it and power jump up. Continuing climbing up. Go through the door at the top. You only have one mushroom block with which to defeat Ostro. So get on his right then throw it left, this gives you more time to pick it up before he fires at you.

World 7-2
This is the last stage. Use Princess if you can. Go right and through the door. Get used to the feel of the conveyor belts. Go right and up the rope. Go left (beware of the spark) then go up the ropes. Continue past the sparks then up again. Go through the door. Drop down on the right then go down the ladder. Go through the door and collect the blade of grass on the right for a potion. Enter subspace and collect the mushroom. Climb right back up to the top door again. Go through it. Power jump up and then work your way up to the door at the

PRESS ANY KEY

top. Go through it and go right. Go down the rope and kill Ostro for a key. Bare in mind that if Phanto kills you, you have to go back and kill Ostro all over again for another key. Go through the locked door and pick up the crystal.

The mask will now try to kill you. Hit it three times with mushroom blocks then climb through its mouth. You will now meet Wart. To kill him you must catch the vegetables that are come from the funnels and throw them into his open mouth. This requires precise timing since he only opens his mouth to fire bullets at you and these bullets are capable of destroying the vegetables. Once you have killed him you have completed the game and are rewarded with a wonderful end sequence.

Thunder Blade

(Sega)

Ritesh Singh, Darlington.
On level four position yourself at the bottom right-hand corner of the screen and stay there. All enemy missiles and bullets will miss you. To destroy the end of level guardian go to the top right hand corner of the screen and shoot.



Return of the Jedi

(All formats)

Type 'DARTH VADER' in the score table. You can then use F2 to skip to other levels.

Tusker

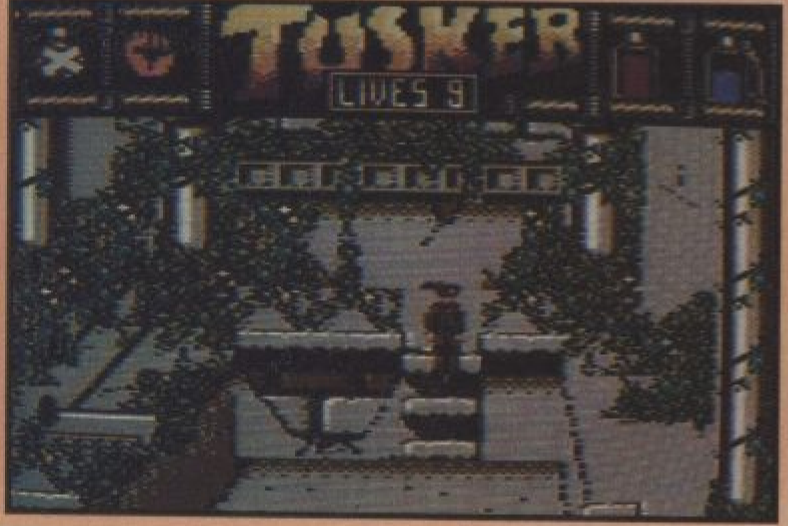
(C64)

System 3's latest game receives the tips treatment from erstwhile TGMer **Robin 'The Welshman' Hogg**. Here's the solution to the first level.

First off, collect the necessary objects from the desert screens. The objects required are the gun, ammunition (found in large box), acid bottle, knife and a water bottle for use later on. On the desert screens if you're hit by whirlwinds then shake the joystick left and right to escape before your energy is sapped. To collect water first find the knife and water bottle and ensure that both are displayed as icons in the objects/weapons display. Now stand left or right of the base of a cactus and stab it to replenish your rapidly dwindling water supply.

Now enter the cave section through the entrance and enter the first lead-off cave. Inside is a chest which needs to be kicked or punched (keep trying both) which contains a book revealing details of the quest ahead. Enter the water section and use the knife to kill the alligator. Enter the end cave beyond the water section and collect the gold nuggets and machete (the gold nuggets need to be collected to complete the game). If you are using the book then standing in front of the wall will display all the screens which must be crossed to finish the load.

Exit the cave section and use the machete to remove bushes from in front of the jungle section. Enter the jungle section and move right while avoiding the wandering natives and monkeys up the trees. You'll now come to the final screen where you need to use the acid bottle on or near the chains tethering the giant slug. The slug will be released and unsurprisingly will kill you if you stand in its way. Shooting the slug causes it to strobe between skeleton and normal but it cannot be killed. Exit the load through the top-right corner of the screen and Load 2 awaits.



Transbot

(Sega)

David Villios, Stanford-Le-Hope.
Before turning on the Sega hold down both fire buttons. Turn the power on while keeping the fire buttons depressed wait for four offs to appear. Then push up, down, left and right. When you start the game you will have infinite lives.

Fantasy Zone

(Sega)

Ritesh Singh, Darlington.
Buy all the engine parts and the ship's weapons will never run out.



Leonardo

(Amiga)

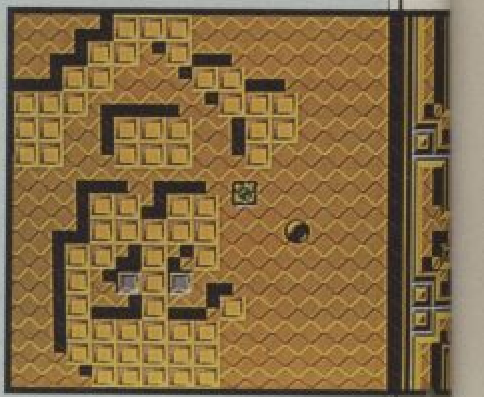
Keith May, Pagenham
To access higher levels type in the following codes: EMMENTALER for level 10, ALPHORN for level 20 and MATTERHORN for level 30. While typing in FREIBIERC gives you infinite lives

Titan

(All formats)

Here are a selection of level codes.

Level 10: H67JR1
Level 20: 1R7DCG
Level 30: BG6W61
Level 40: 294JBH
Level 50: D80N6D
Level 60: 9LQHVU
Level 70: 88H102
Level 80: 0IP4G0



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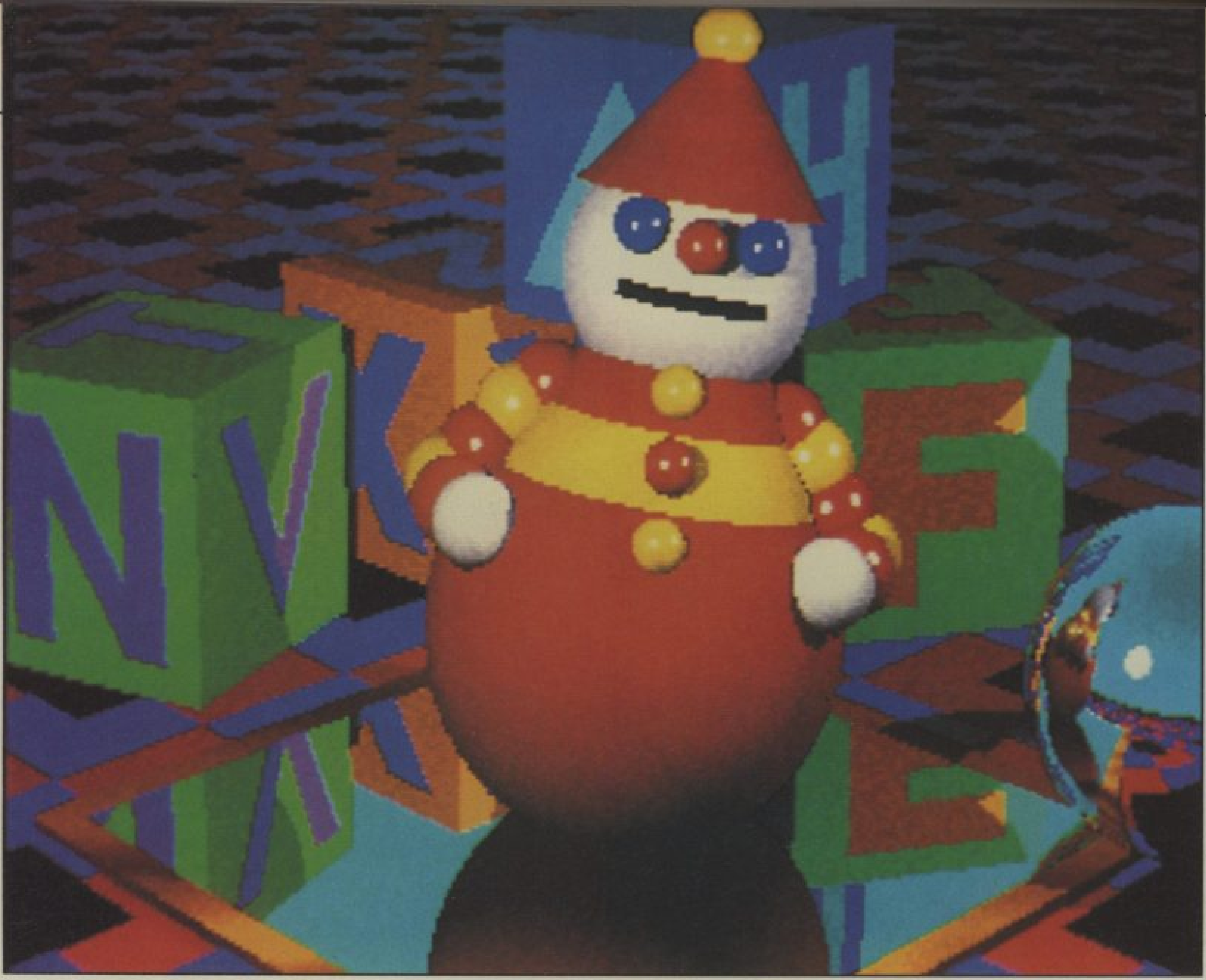
RISCy business



TGM024

It all looked too good to be true: a 32-bit processor using reduced instruction set computing technology (RISC), running at speeds that made the ST and Amiga look positively pedestrian; a sound chip which rivalled many low-cost synthesizers; 256 colours onscreen, and an Amiga-beating screen resolution. With graphics and sound chips capable of producing astounding games and a processor running at speeds to more than satisfy the most demanding of application packages, the Acorn Archimedes was going to be the ultimate home computer. There was just one problem: price. To get your Archimedes up and running previously cost around £1000. Well out of the reach of most upgraders. However, Acorn have recently introduced a new model into the Archimedes range costing £747. Robin Candy takes a look at the A3000 to see if Acorn have finally got it right.

ALSO IN CENTRE BYTES



No toy, this one: Once too pricey for the average computer enthusiast, the Archimedes is at least trying to come down in price so that more people may enjoy its 32-bit qualities... especially art.

All the previous models in the Archimedes range house the computer and disk drives in a different casing from keyboard, to give it that business look that Acorn were aiming for. The new A3000 has everything built into one box and now resembles a cross between the old BBC and the Amiga. For your money you get a computer with 1Mb RAM and built-in 3.5-inch disk drive, a clutch of bulky user manuals, a three-button mouse and a few application disks. Just connect up a monitor, plug in your mouse and you're ready to enter a 32-bit world of reduced instruction set computing.

Most of the expansion ports and sockets are situated at the back of the computer. These include a 64-way DIN expansion port, 3.5mm stereo jack socket, phono mono video port, 9-pin RGB socket for connection to monitors, parallel printer port, Econet socket (so that the Archimedes can be connected to an Econet network — commonly found in schools and colleges) and a 9-pin serial upgrade port. Like the Atari ST, the mouse port is awkwardly situated underneath the computer.

Once powered up, you're presented with a virtually blank screen. In the bottom right-hand corner is the Archimedes logo and a palette icon, used to change the screen colour. In the bottom left-hand corner is a disk drive icon, the key to open the door to the Archie's goodies. Clicking on this calls up the parent directory of whatever disk is currently in the drive. From then on, it's just a matter of clicking on the icon of whatever program you want to load — simple.

The application disks contain a set of programs to introduce you to some of the Archimedes' capabilities. First there is a help application which displays text about any other applications currently running. Just point the mouse at an icon or option and relevant text will be displayed in the help window. There are four editors: text, music and two for graphics; some desktop accessories (such as a calculator and clock); and a few simple games.

The text editor can be used as either a very simple word processor or to edit BASIC programs. It includes simple block manipulation commands. Once a piece of text has been marked as a block it can be copied to another point in the document, deleted, saved to disk or indented. The Indent command moves the block a specified number of character spaces across (useful for tabulation). The Find options are quite sophisticated for a free processor. At its simplest, it can be used as a find and replace command, as found on virtually all word processors. Once the search is complete the user is given a number of options such as replace, skip to next occurrence, or abandon search. There are also a number of fonts to choose from, all of which can be resized. If you're only going to use a word processor for the occasional letter, this one is more than adequate.

Paint is the bundled art program. Features include a spray can with adjustable nozzle size and spray density, geometric shapes (circles, ellipses, rectangles etc), fills, zoom and block commands. Pictures are kept in the form of a sprite, each with their own design window. Each sprite has its editing menus where the sprite can be flipped, rotated or resized. A sprite can then be picked up and used as a brush. A sprite can be saved to disk then imported into another of the free programs, Draw.

Draw is an object-orientated graphics editor. Pictures are constructed from various kinds of graphical objects, such as ellipses and rectangles. Together, Paint and Draw make a useful art package.

Maestro is a music program that allows traditional music notation to be transcribed into the Archimedes. You can have up to eight monophonic instruments playing at a time, with stereo panning for each voice. All the traditional notation symbols are present but there is very little in the way of editing commands. You can't even block copy a section of music, which can be a bit of a pain if you're writing music which reuses the same theme in several places. Also, there are no transpose commands to copy music between staves.

Also hidden away on the disks is a BBC emulator. The limitations are documented in the manual but you shouldn't experience too many problems with most BBC B programs.

The desktop accessories include a clock, calculator, alarm clock (it can be set to display messages at specific times) and a configuration file which allows you to alter many aspects of the Archimedes' desktop: speed of the mouse, sound volume and speed of the keyboard repeat, for instance.

There are four games included on the disks. Lander is probably the best and is really a demonstration level of Zarch (which

appeared as Virus on other computers). The others are a card game (Patience) and two puzzle games. Other than Lander, the games aren't really worth bothering with. Generally, though, the programs on the application disks cover a good range of interests.

In use

But what's it like to use? Personally, I prefer the Archimedes to either the Atari ST or Amiga. The desktop is friendly, very easy to use and shouldn't present any problems to even the most inexperienced user. It's got the ability to cope with anything demanded of it. Some software houses program in a slower, high-level language (instead of machine code) because the processor is so fast the user won't notice. Zarch is, in fact, programmed in BASIC — how's that for power! But no computer can survive without software and Acorn have recently started drumming up support. A couple of months ago, Acorn held a conference with the cream of the British software industry, from which several major software houses pledged their software conversions.

However, there are a few flaws which may put off some potential buyers. The sound chip is excellent, but sound is output through two weedy speakers on either side of the machine. I would have thought that after bothering to include RGB and mono video ports (you can't use the machine with a TV as the display has far too high a resolution) Acorn would have sent the sound to the monitor. The quality of the speakers doesn't do the sound chip justice. There is a 3.5mm stereo headphones socket on the back but this isn't the easiest of sockets to connect up to a hi-fi.

Also there are no MIDI or standard Atari 9-pin joystick ports. Good music packages are available, but you will have to pay an additional £79.95 for a MIDI interface. Whereas the Voltmace Delta-Cat joystick costs a whopping £29.95.

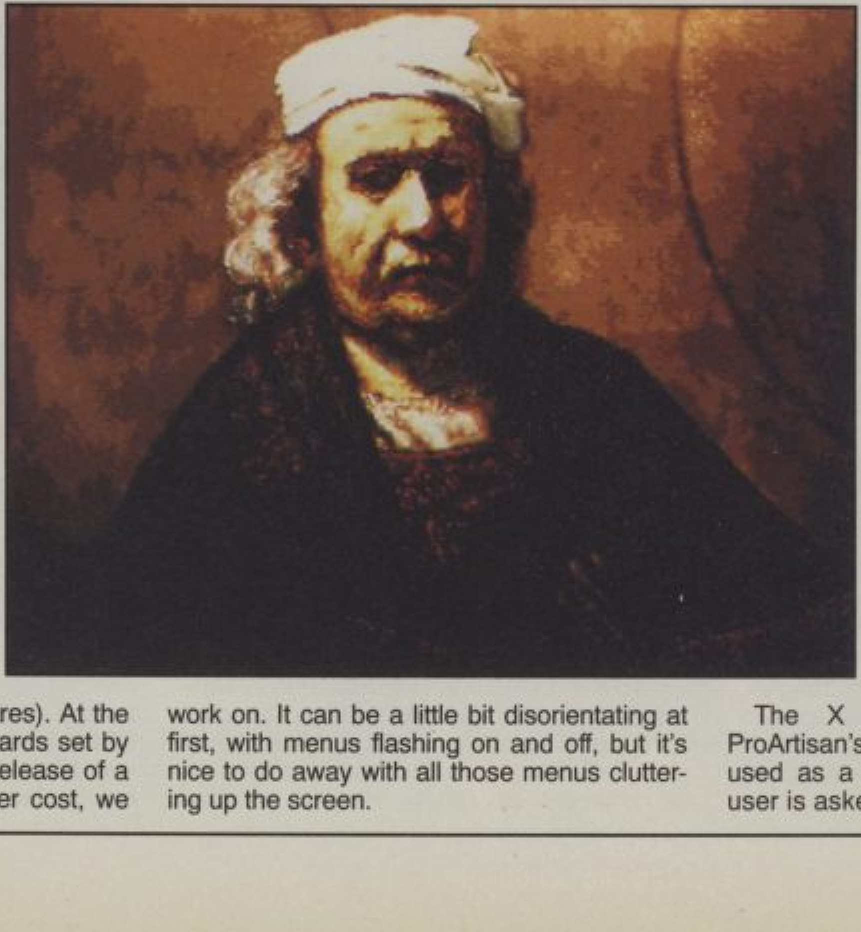
The Archimedes is an excellent computer. It's got so much potential but £747 is still a high price to pay. Hopefully, Acorn will reduce the price further and make it a true ST/Amiga beater. Power without the price?

Art for Arc's sake

Clares Micro Supplies are at the forefront of applications software for the Archimedes. Producing quality sound and graphics packages, including the excellent Render Bender (a 3-D ray-tracing program — demo pictures can be seen scattered around these pages). Way back in TGM010, Robin Candy took an indepth look at the first art programs to emerge on the Archimedes (one from Clares). At the time they weren't up to the standards set by the ST or Amiga. Now, with the release of a new Archimedes model at a lower cost, we thought it was time to examine one of the successors to those early programs.

Clare's Artisan was fine as far as it went but it didn't go far in exploiting the Archimedes' graphics potential. ProArtisan (normally £169.95; £99.95 for schools) takes over from where the original left off...





Leonardo da Vinci has lent his name to art packages before now, so it makes a nice change to see Rembrandt getting an airing. His atmospheric painting style might not have produced the occasional riverscape scene (above), but the Archimedes certainly does justice to his famous self-portrait which hangs in Kenwood House, Highgate, London.

Virtually all art utilities operate in a WIMP environment, ProArtisan being no different. Where it does differ from other art utilities is in the way that the WIMP enviroment is implemented. Windows and menus are called up by the middle mouse button and only stay onscreen for as long as they are needed. Once an option has been selected the menu disappears, leaving you with a full screen to work on. It can be a little bit disorientating at first, with menus flashing on and off, but it's nice to do away with all those menus cluttering up the screen.

The main menu contains just eight icons. Five of these access various graphic menus, while the other three are concerned with disk management, quitting the program and help functions respectively.

The Draw Menu

The draw menu (represented by an icon of a pencil nib) forms the core of the program, featuring the basic drawing utilities to get your ideas onto screen. There are just four preset brush shapes: circle, square, triangle and oval. However, at the top of the menu are plus and minus signs. ProArtisan uses these two icons to increase or decrease a setting. When used in conjunction with the built-in brushes, they increase or decrease their size.

The Zoom function is virtually the same as the one featured in Artisan, which is a shame as this was one area of the program that I felt would have benefitted from a few improvements. There are three levels of magnification: x2, x4 and x8. These are fine, but the magnification window takes up almost all of the screen and obscures the rest of the picture. Sometimes an alteration appears fine when a portion of the screen is magnified but once reduced back to its normal size, and shown in relation to the rest of the picture, it may not look so great. An adjustable magnification window would have made a nice feature.

Next on the draw menu is the Fill option. Once selected, this calls up a submenu with a variety of fill options. A solid fill fills an area with any desired colour, while three gradient fills add shading and colour graduations to an area. The Circular Fill fills an area starting from the cursor point with a graduating range of colours.

The colours in the graduation are user-definable, as is the size of each band of colour. So if you filled a circle with a colour graduation ranging from white to black with small gaps between the bands the circles created would appear white in the centre graduating out to black at the circumference. There are also horizontal and vertical gradient fills which work along the same lines.

An additional command, linear/log step, can be used in conjunction with the gradient fills. Linear stepping sets the bands of colour to an equal thickness determined by the user. While logarithmic stepping alters the gradient fill so that the bands get progressively thicker as the fill radiates out from the cursor point. A shade direction icon allows you to alter the direction of the shading (funnily enough).

The X icon appears on many of ProArtisan's menus, on the draw menu it is used as a sort of transparent option. The user is asked to choose a colour. Once one

PRESS ANY KEY


A Bigger Splash: will we be seeing Hockney turning his hand to computer art soon...?

has been selected, whenever the airbrush option is used it will only appear on portions of the screen that feature that colour. Extremely useful if you want to spray some fine detail on a shape without going over its boundary lines.

The tap icon is the wash or anti-aliasing option. It is used to smooth out transitions between colours by inserting intermediate colours so that there is a smooth colour graduation between two parts of a picture, rather than a stark contrast of colours. The drops icon on the wash submenu controls the rate of anti-aliasing. A single drop produces a single wash which results in a slight blending between the colours, while multiple drops continue the blending process for however long the mouse button is kept depressed, so that eventually the area is blended to just a few colours.

Also on the draw menu is an airbrush facility. Both the size of the airbrush nozzle and the density of the spray can be adjusted. Pressing the middle mouse button while spraying, produces a multi-coloured spray effect. Naturally the range of colours sprayed can be selected by the user.

Magic Brush is a quick colour change command. It allows you to change up to 25 colours into 25 different colours in one pass of the brush.

The final two icons on the draw menu allow the user to create their own multicolour fill patterns and custom pen shapes.

Shapes

Back on the main menu the next icon calls up the banding (as in rubber banding) menu. This is essentially the same as the shapes menu in the old Artisan. There are a variety of shapes including: triangles, rectangles, circles and ellipses. However, there are two additional commands.

Grid Lock creates an invisible grid behind the picture. Once this is switched on, lines and shapes automatically 'snap to' the nearest grid intersection. The second new command is Bezier curves. Once in operation the user first draws a straight line. Four control points then appear, which allow you to create a number of curves in the one line (this is how you would draw a sine wave).

Once drawn, the Bezier curve can be stretched to any size. Using Bezier curves, it is possible to quickly produce a 'proper' outline for a shape, without having that square and hard computer look. Once set, it is possible to go back to a specific curve, which may not look 'just right', and alter (curve or straighten) it.

The next icon along the main menu accesses the sprite menu. Any portion of the screen can be grabbed and used as a sprite. The sprite commands have been improved, so that you can go into zoom mode then accurately grab a piece of the screen. Once a sprite has been defined, a mask that is the same size and shape of the sprite can be created — very useful for creating drop shadows. Sprites can also be rescaled to any size using click and drag techniques.

Toolbox

Fourth along the main menu is the spanner icon. This takes you to the tool menu. It includes icons to send the current picture to the printer (there are a variety of printer drivers), plus other useful gadgets.

The global toner icon is an interesting colour-converting option. First the user specifies a rectangular area, then the computer calculates the luminance value of each colour within the rectangle. The colours are then replaced by the colour matching its position in the current colour set. The replacement colour is not selected on luminance, just its position within the colour set. So if the colour set is made up of shades of grey then the area within the rectangle will be changed to simple shades of grey. However, if the colour set is multi-coloured it produces some interesting effects. By defining a range with some bright red, blues and greens you can imitate solarization techniques used by professional photographers and achieve psychedelic results. Also included on the tool menu are the text and font editor icons.

Finally there's distort. This works with the grab sprite options. Basically, what it does is distort any sprite into any shape. If you've drawn a picture and want some of it reflected onto a sphere. Just grab part of the picture then distort it onto a circle to give an accurate reflection, it couldn't be simpler (or more impressive).

Cut and paste

The Cut and Paste menu from Artisan has been included and is accessible from the main menu. Sections of the screen can be grabbed, then flipped, rotated or resized. However, most of the functions are already duplicated on the sprite menus.

Overall

The original Artisan performed adequately, but offered little of note. It was restricted to just 16 colours and lacked an airbrush facility, hardly pushing the Archimedes to its limits. In TGM010 I concluded that 'The Archimedes obviously has the potential but sadly lacks the programs.' ProArtisan goes a long way to redressing that. The pictures featured in this article show just what the Archimedes is capable of when used with an excellent art utility.

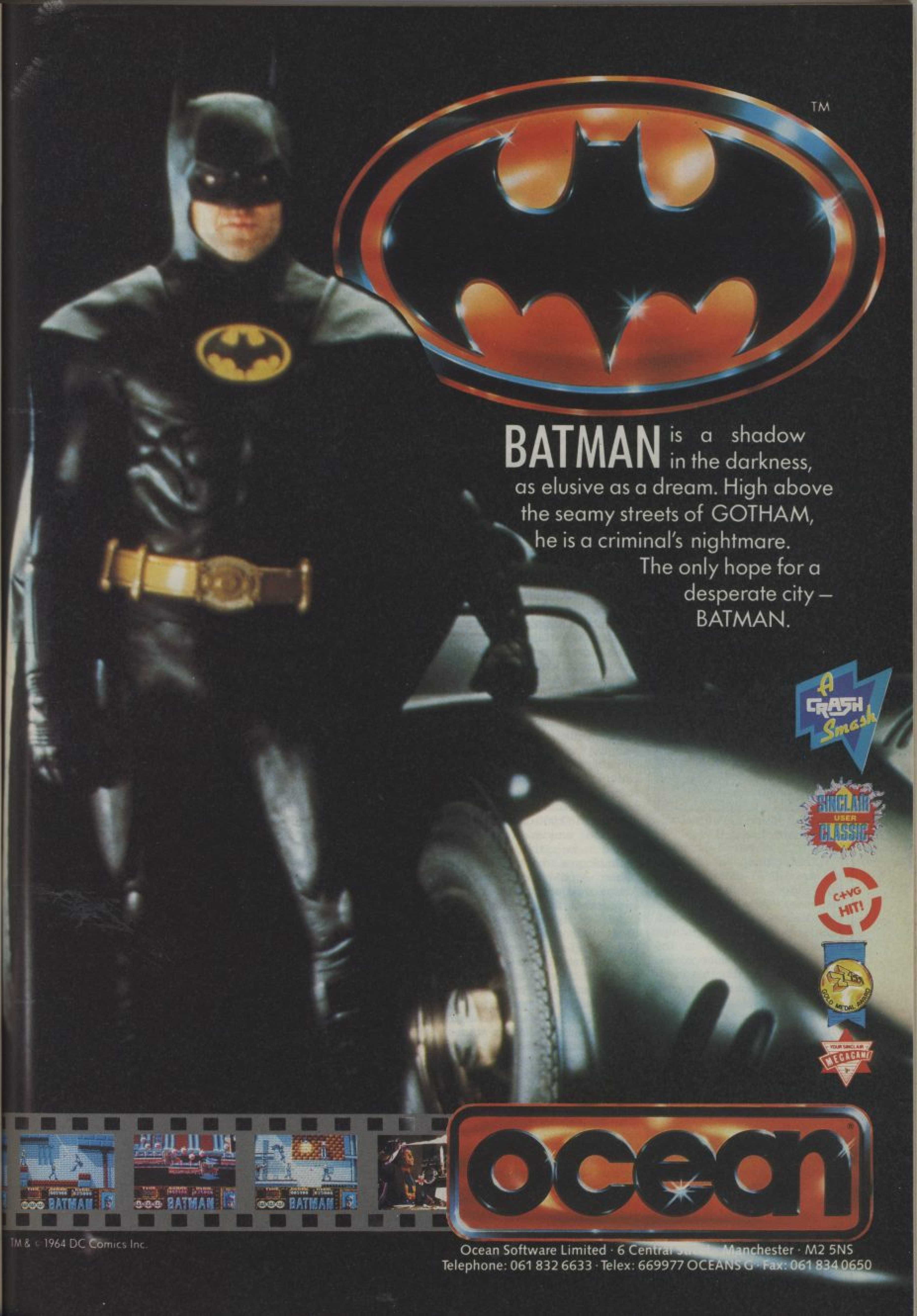
There are now a possible 256 colours onscreen, more than the ST or Amiga (HAM mode on the Amiga is only really practical for digitising). With an excellent airbrush facility now included, with adjustable spray density — an option sadly lacking on most art utilities _, ProArtisan has all the features any ordinary artist would require.

Manuals are often daunting, full of jargon and poorly organised. ProArtisan's manual is excellent. A dictionary of terms is included at the front of the manual, where it's most needed by new users. The manual then takes the user through various tutorials to illustrate the functions of the different icons. This helps a lot, since the functions are not always immediately apparent from the graphic icon. While a help icon provides onscreen assistance.

Many of the art utilities available for the 16-bit computers come complete with a dazzling array of functions, many of which produce only slightly different results. Personally I'm a bit sceptical whether all of these are necessary or even useful to the end user. ProArtisan includes its own fair share of extras, some good, some redundant, but hasn't gone overboard by stressing just one aspect of the program. Favourite features include the solarizing icon and the wash functions. The wash, in particular, is a very powerful blend option which is much better than similar functions on any of the 16-bit computers, creating excellent colour graduations. It's great to see that the Archimedes is now getting the kind of software it deserves.

CLARES MICRO SUPPLIES: 98 Middlewich Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 7DA. Tel: (0606) 48511.

As the A3000 comes nearer to accessible 32-bit technology for ordinary folk, TGM will be featuring more utilities available for the Archimedes.


TM
BATMAN is a shadow in the darkness,
as elusive as a dream. High above
the seamy streets of GOTHAM,
he is a criminal's nightmare.
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desperate city –
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A CRASH Smash
SINCLAIR USER CLASSIC
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AMIGA

It's like a scene out of the Twilight Zone. The Place: The Hyatt Regency Hotel, Chicago, USA. The Setting: AmiExpo. The People: The usual hodgepodge of suits, T-shirts, jeans, walkie-talkies, service revolvers, secret service men... WHAT? Marshal M Rosenthal dons his Geraldo disguise and investigates

If there was ever a time to be paranoid, this is it. It turns out that the Governors of America are having a conference in a ballroom just 30 steps away from AmiExpo's hall. Every door, hallway and elevator is filled with an unsmiling gent (or gentess) wearing an intense look and poking occasionally at the earphone trailing down into their collar. Everybody throughout the hotel is on their BEST behaviour — don't expect that any towels will be stolen this weekend! Let's pass the invisible checkpoints and head into the show.



Create professional video effects with Invision Plus

The first thing we notice is the size: HUGE. More displays, with bigger monitors. There's also more vendors selling merchandise, as well as more Amiga-specific magazines hawking their wares in the hope of snagging subscribers. But it's the products that interest us, so off we go to see some of the more unusual and interesting items.

It looks like someone ready to play some music videos, but actually it's a demonstration of Invision Plus, from Elan Design. This software package combines with the Live frame grabber (A-squared Software) to create professional video effects at a key press. Mirroring, stretching, posterization and more can all be easily accomplished in realtime using both actual digitised images as well as previously stored IFF ones (in varying resolutions). Even animation files can be created and played back. Invision Plus requires one megabyte of RAM and is compatible with all Amiga Genloks.

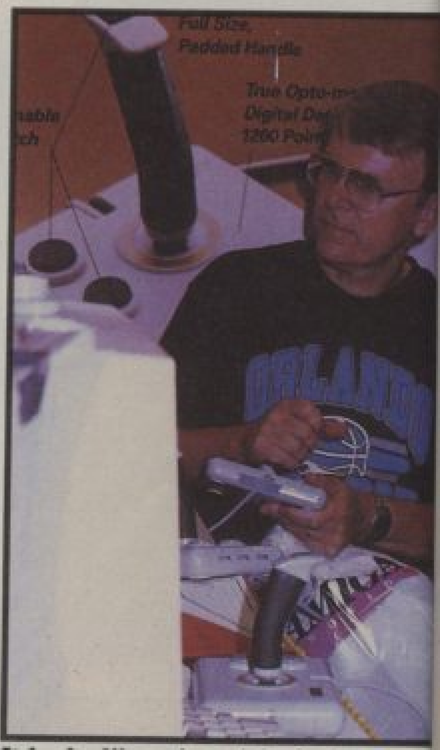
Also occupying a booth filled with monitors is New Tek. They're soft-pedalling Toaster (out for 1990), but Digi Paint 3 is worth a look at present. Possessing many of the features now considered common in a HAM paint program, new touches include colorisation of black and white images. Realtime scrolling of overscanned displays can be up to 1024 pixels high, and texture mapping with anti-aliasing gives super-fast warping and stretching of onscreen images. Text can now include anti-aliased fonts, rainbow fonts, and more — and with the Transfer 24-image processing software allows support of all Amiga resolution modes. Probably of most interest is the variable dithering, which can compute over one billion colours internally to render an apparent 100,000 onscreen.

Seated amidst a growing crowd in the Intuitive Technologies booth is Jay Miner — the father of the Amiga. Rare to make an appearance, he is signing autographs of those purchasing a copy of Mike Lehman's Ultracard (Lehman wrote many of the first Amiga programs, including MaxxiPlan and the Developer's Kit). Ultracard (pictured below) is similar to the Mac's Hypercard in that it works by manipulating stacks of information and then presenting it to the viewer. Think of it as grabbing a file card which says to go to another one and then another. But then add the instant access of the Amiga, animation and sound effects. Lehman's program enables non-programmers to quickly and efficiently create their own onscreen applications. 'Plus it adds colour, variable screen resolution, is multitasking and works with ARexx,' adds Miner.

Speaking of programmers, Inovatronics' Cando is an applications generator that lets anyone create desktop videos, interactive presentations, tutorials and more. Cando can utilise files from other programs; take graphics from DeluxePaint III, or Digiview; and get sound files from AudioMaster or Perfect Sound. Cando directly controls ARexx, ATalk 3, and other programs supporting ARexx, and allows the combining of IFF files into your own software with menus, windows, gadgets and timers. IFF support includes ILBM, GRAB, 8SVX and BrushANIMS. Any Amiga with a minimum of one megabyte can use Cando. Can you?

Joysticks don't exactly cause excitement, but The Gravis Mousestick (Advanced Gravis Ltd) might change that view. It's a digital controller with a pistol-grip handle and two buttons — looks familiar enough — but also contains a true opto-mechanical system for extremely accurate movements. Add to that an upgradable 16K ROM which allows for user-controlled changes in performance, eight tension settings, and three programmable buttons which can emulate up to eight keyboard commands. Not so commonplace now, is it?

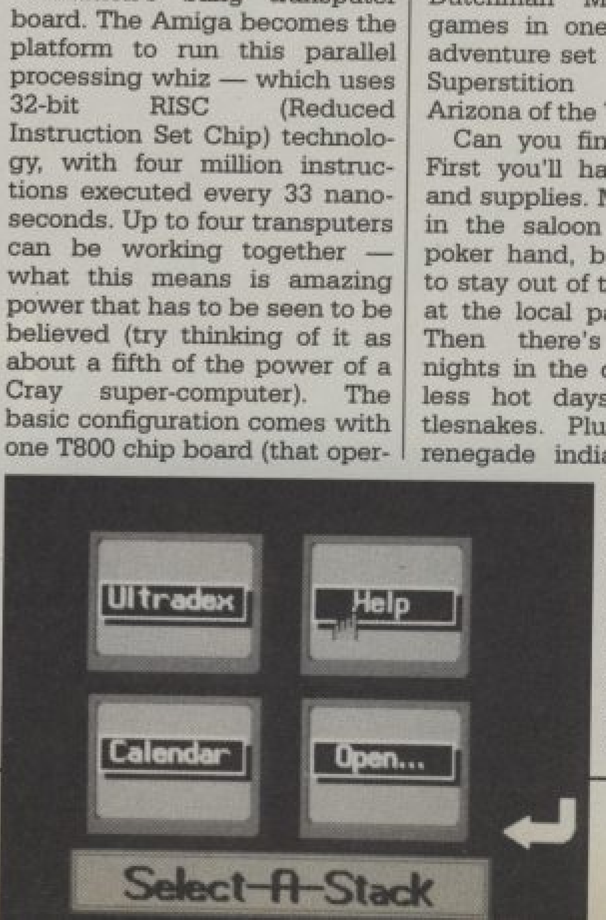
You've no doubt heard about the Atari Transputer — so make way for digital Animation's Sang transputer board. The Amiga becomes the platform to run this parallel processing whiz — which uses 32-bit RISC (Reduced Instruction Set Chip) technology, with four million instructions executed every 33 nanoseconds. Up to four transputers can be working together — what this means is amazing power that has to be seen to be believed (try thinking of it as about a fifth of the power of a Cray super-computer). The basic configuration comes with one T800 chip board (that operates at speeds of 20, 25 or 30 MHz), and one megabyte of RAM — expandable to four T800s and 16Mb. The operating system is HELIOS, the same used by Atari and developed by Perihelion in England. The final bit of astounding news is that the basic unit costs around £3,000 (much less than the Atari unit).



It looks like a joystick, feels like a joystick but, in fact, it's a Mousestick

With the Christmas approaching, it's time for new games to start making their debut. Magnetic Images' Lost Dutchman Mine is several games in one. It's a graphic adventure set in the legendary Superstition Mountains of Arizona of the Wild West.

Can you find the treasure? First you'll have to buy food and supplies. Maybe win some in the saloon with a deadly poker hand, but generally try to stay out of trouble (a glance at the local paper may help). Then there's the freezing nights in the desert, the endless hot days and the rattlesnakes. Plus bandits and renegade indians. Of course, once you find the mine... But that might take a bit since there are over 100 of them. Featuring digitised sound and MIDI-compatible music,



ATTACK

the game is set in realtime and requires one megabyte.

More adventure comes your way from the creators of Hybris and Sword of Soden, in the form of Battle Squadron. Fight your way through many frightening levels of danger in this action-orientated arcade-style shoot-'em-up.

Or try to defeat the evil commander Borf in Space Ace (Readysoft). Continuing in the tradition of Dragon's Lair, the game will feature great graphics and derring-do (the running demo looks fantastic). Can you rescue the beautiful Kimberley and defeat the villain's Infanto Ray? Readysoft notes that the Atari ST version of Lair is almost ready as well, so STers hold on just a bit longer (perhaps this version will be able to use a hard disk?).

Other companies touting games are Psygnosis and Sierra Online. Sierra's Space Quest 3: The Pirates of Pestulon is due out soon. It's another great quest for truth, justice and the pursuit of intergalactic hamburgers.

Meanwhile, back on Earth, C Ltd's C-View I RGB video adaptor can make life easier for those upgrading to an Amiga, but not wanting to junk their existing monitor. The adaptor connects to any Amiga through the RGB port and then onto many monitors which use a composite video input — internal components in the cable create a very credible image. Those with monitors accepting Chroma and Luma inputs will want to check out C-View II.



Get your chip cookies at the Blue Ribbon Bakery

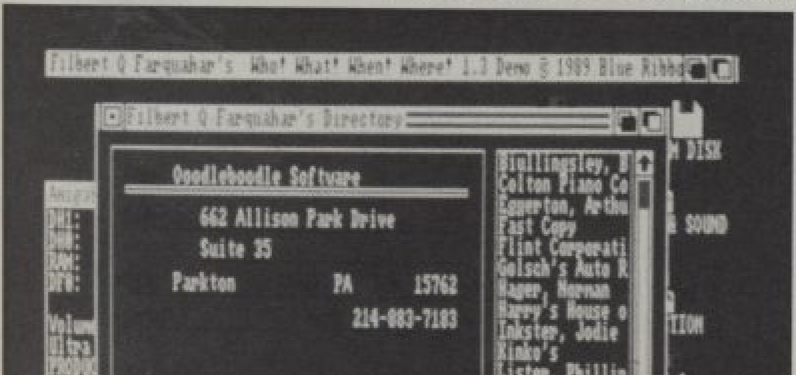
Both are available in PAL versions and work with international monitors.

After Issue 22's coverage of A-Max, those involved in emulating a Macintosh will be interested to see Mac II DOS from Central Coast Software. This software will transfer Mac text and graphics from their Mac home onto the Amiga. Using the supplied hardware interface and an Apple drive (which will draw its power from the Amiga), the Amiga can perform all the functions needed to make life easier: transfer MIDI music files between formats, clip art, even put Postscript files onto a Mac drive for those printing houses who don't handle Amiga disks. It's strictly for the wide world of black and white graphics though, CCS noting that not much of the colour stuff is out there. Mac II DOS supports multitasking, and all commands are done through a mouse-controlled graphical interface.

Two packages are available. The first includes the interface, file transfer software and conversion program. Package B also has a special Mac-compatible drive that will also read/write Amiga disks (unfortunately this drive will not work with Readysoft's A-Max emulator).

Before leaving, we pop over to Blue Ribbon Bakery, where they've dressed up in cooks' outfits and are passing out chocolate chip cookies. Their Who! What! When! Where! program creates a simple onscreen interface to keep your appointments and life together. Also being demoed is the upcoming Bars and Pipes. Much more than a music program, this MIDI-compatible creativity package allows the user to alter and control sounds and musical patterns in a quick and intuitive way using icons. Arranging the pipes and valves allows re-direction of the musical information towards a new shape. The sequencer has no limit to the number of tracks available, and a full-featured editor includes a piano-roll format for those less musically inclined.

With our mouths full of crumbs, we head out of the show in pursuit of a water fountain. Along the way we draw stares from a number of quiet, non-Amiga goers — who decide to accompany us as we leave the hotel.



Who! What! When! Where! It's all at the latest Amiga Expo

Photos: Marshal M Rosenthal

Product Information:

Advanced Gravis Computer Technologies
7033 Antrim Avenue,
Burnaby, British Colombia,
Canada V5J 4M5.
Advanced Gravis
Mousestick: $80.00.

Blue Ribbon Bakery
1248 Clairmont Road, Suite 3D, Atlanta, Georgia 30030.
Who! What! When! Where!, Bars and Pipes.

C Ltd
723 East Skinner, Wichita,
Kansas 67211.
C-View I and C-View II: $49.95 each.

Central Coast Software
424 Vista Avenue, Golden,
Colorado 80401.
Mac II DOS: $99.95 (A), $349.95 (B).

Digital Animation Productions
79 Mount Vernon Street,
Boston MA 02108.
Sang Board.

Elan Design
Box 31725, San Francisco,
California 94131,
Invision Plus $299.00.

Innerprise Software
128 Cockeysville, Hunt Valley
MD 21030.
Battle Squadron.
Also distributors for
Magnetic Images' **Lost Dutchman Mine: $49.95.**

Inovatronics
8499 Garden Road, Suite 6,
Monteray, California 93940.
Ultracard: $50.

New Tek
115 West Crane Street,
Topeka, Kansas 66603.
Digi Paint 3: $99.00.

Readysoft
301 Wertheim Court, Unit 2,
Richmond Hill, Ontario
Canada L4B 1B9.
Space Ace: $59.95.

Prices are US retail. Please check with Issue 22 (page 73) as to procedure for overseas purchases.

INFORMATION DESK

The Centre Bytes experts take time off from finding the dollar sign on the Mac to answer another batch of readers letters. Then they're off down the pub.

Music for the masses

1) Why does the Atari ST receive so much more music software than the Amiga?
2) What is the best value music sequencer or sampler for the Amiga?
3) I can't find any of your brilliant kits that link up the Amiga to a hi-fi which you were selling in TGM Shopping ages ago. Have you sold out?
James Rosen, Southgate

1) The ST receives more attention on the music front simply because of its built-in MIDI ports. It was the first home computer to include MIDI ports so it immediately attracted music software. Music studios started to include STs in their recording setups. So once some people started to use the ST for music more software houses started producing music software. The ST just happened to get into the music niche before the Amiga. However, the Amiga is just starting to take off: most music releases are now available on both formats.
2) Take a look at this month's sequencer special for the lowdown on a good range of sequencers and a full explanation of sequencing terms. We're planning a TGM special on samplers for Issue 26. In the meantime take a look at Future Sound from Applied Visions. For £79.95 you get all the hardware and software necessary to produce all your own samples. Samples are saved in IFF format so it's compatible with most popular music packages such as Deluxe Music Construction Set.
APPLIED VISIONS LTD: Jersey Supreme Works, 538-546 Whippendell Road, Watford, Herts WD1 1QN. Tel:(0923) 818078.
3) Sorry, but we no longer stock those leads. However, a trip to your local hi-fi store should sort you out with the necessary leads. (Just ask for two phono-phono leads.)

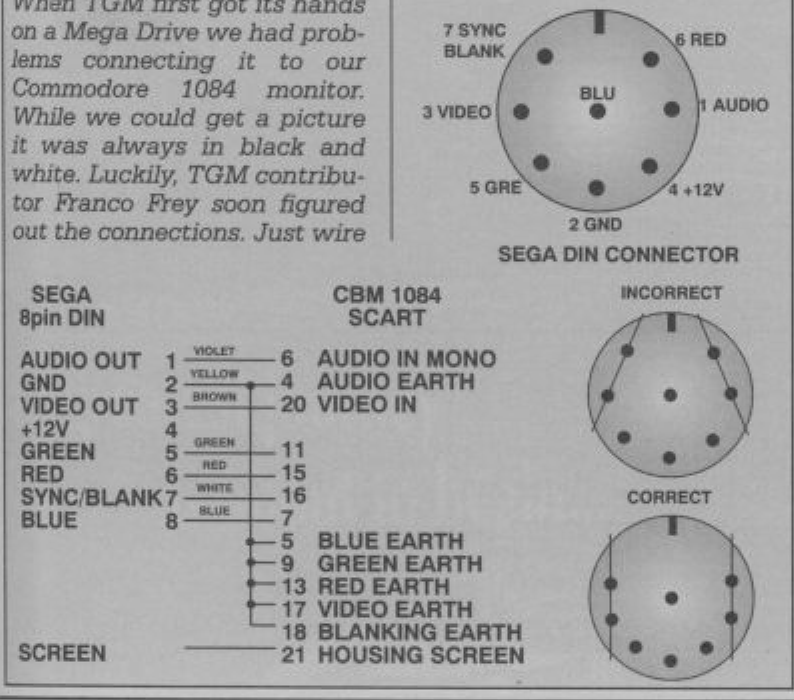
Console yourself

Sometime in the near future I intend to buy either a PC Engine or a Sega Mega Drive, but it's hard choosing between the two of them.
1) Which of the two machines has better graphics?
2) Which has the better sound?
3) Will the Sega be well supported when it is officially released in Britain?
4) When will it arrive?
Caspar Sawyer, Exeter.

1 and 2) It's hard to choose between the PC Engine and Mega Drive in terms of graphics and sound. They're both very impressive. It all comes down to software support. There are only a few games available for the Mega Drive at the moment (reviewed in TGM 019) but expect this to increase.
3) Virgin will be handling the marketing of the Mega Drive in the UK. Which means it should be very well supported by games when it is finally launched. At the moment there are more games available for the PC Engine but NEC, as yet, don't have any plans to launch the Engine in the UK so there is no guarantee of software availability.
4) There are still no firm release dates but we expect Virgin to officially launch the Mega Drive in summer of next year — expect to pay £150-200.

Living on the ceiling

I'm considering obtaining a Sega Mega Drive through relatives living in Britain. Currently I own a Commodore Amiga which I use with a Commodore 1084 monitor. The monitor has a euroconnector socket on the back. Would a SCART Mega Drive work properly with my monitor? If so, what would the quality of the graphics be like?
Jonathan Higginson, New South Wales, Australia.
When TGM first got its hands on a Mega Drive we had problems connecting it to our Commodore 1084 monitor. While we could get a picture it was always in black and white. Luckily, TGM contributor Franco Frey soon figured out the connections. Just wire an eight-pin DIN plug to a SCART plug as shown in the diagram and you should have full-colour pictures. Make sure you buy the correct eight-pin DIN plug — there are two types. The correct plug has pin seven directly above pin three and pin six directly above pin one (see diagram). The picture quality is fine. All the photos for the Mega Drive and the PC Engine are taken from our 1084 monitor.



Where are they now?

Could you please tell me what's happened to the following games. I've been waiting ages for them.
1) Damocles: Mercenary 2;
2) Logotron's Starblaze.
Sam Fernozia, Nottingham

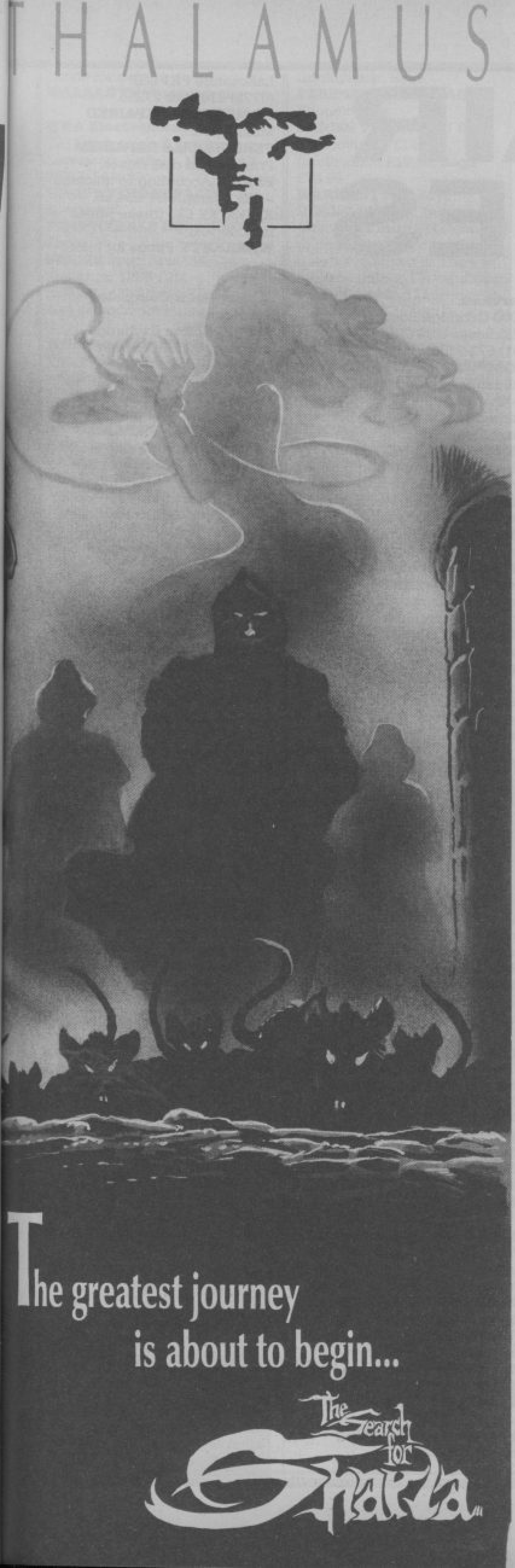
1) Damocles has been in production for at least two years now. TGM carried exclusive shots of the game way back in its first issue! On contacting Novagen we are assured that the release of Damocles is within sight. It should be finished this month, and released early November. The plot revolves around a giant comet called Damocles. It's on course to collide with your home world Eris and it's up to you to stop the comet. The game includes nine planets, assorted moons and 30 cities for the player to explore — all in superb 3-D. Just like Mercenary, it promises to be a blockbusting game. Unfortunately, it will only be available for the ST and Amiga, priced at £24.95. Watch out for a full review in next issue of TGM.
2) Starblaze should be released by the time you read this. It's described as a 3-D Nemesis-type shoot-'em-up. A full review next month.

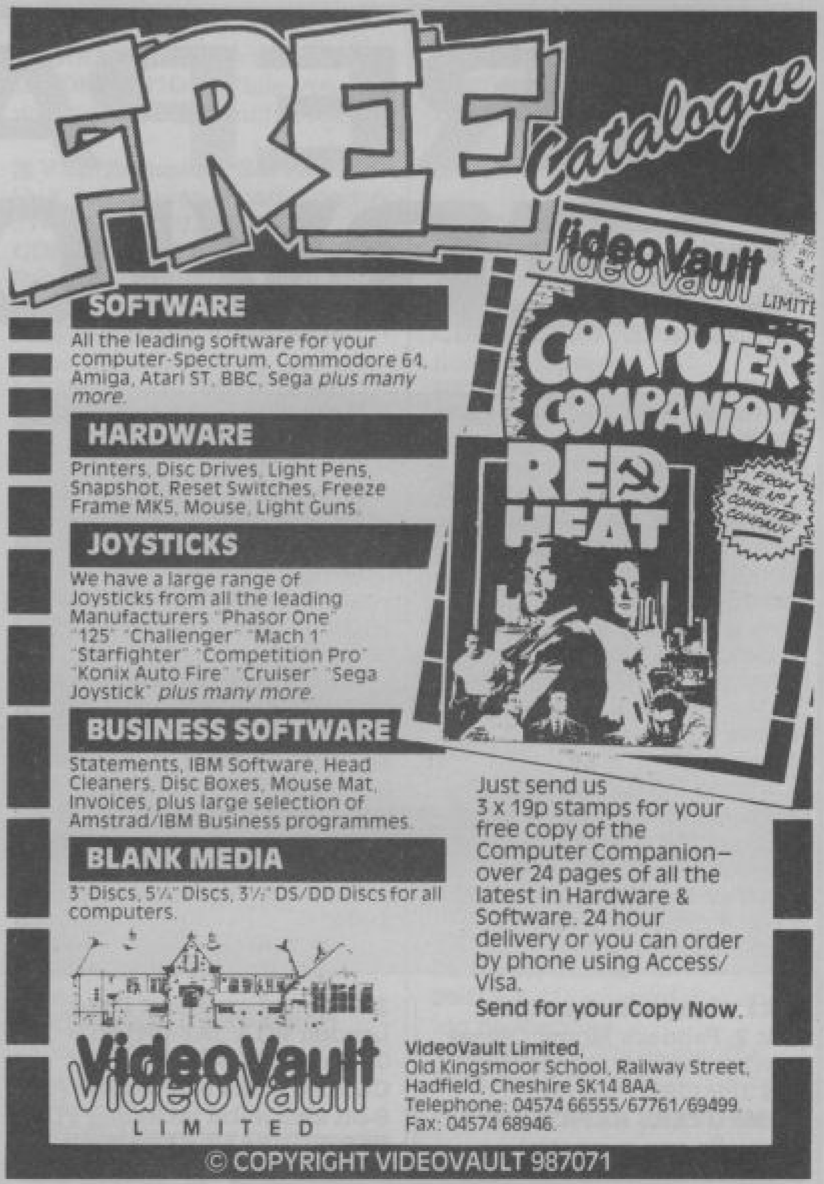
Hey, moss

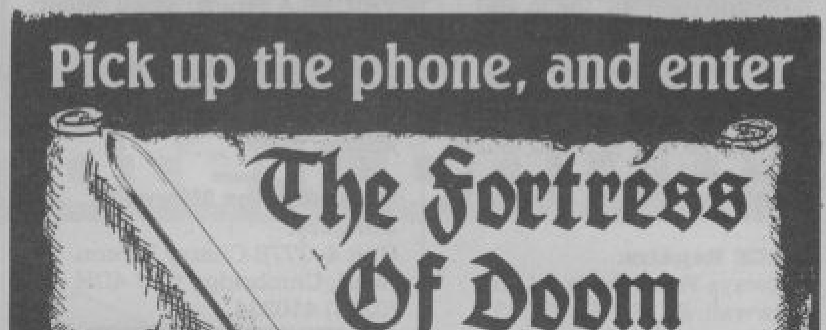
In Issue 12, you state that the STOS games creator is going to be converted to the Amiga. It hasn't been released yet, will it ever? If so when?
Iain Rawson, Leeds.

Mandarin Software are planning to launch AMOS within the next few months. It should then be followed by a variety of supporting packages, just like those currently available for the ST. For more information contact Mandarin Software: Europa House, Adlington Park, Adlington, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Tel: (0625) 878888.

Baffled by baked beans? Troubled by tomatoes? Harangued by Heinz? Send all your dietary and computing problems to: Information Desk, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB. Schedules are still tight, so, much as we would like too, we can't enter into personal correspondence.


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The Search for Sharla


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JOYSTICKS
We have a large range of Joysticks from all the leading Manufacturers "Phasor One" "125" "Challenger" "Mach 1" "Starfighter" "Competition Pro" "Konix Auto Fire" "Cruiser" "Sega Joystick" plus many more.
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GUIDE TO REPAIR SERVICES

No matter how much you care for a computer, eventually something goes wrong.

And you can bet your life it'll happen after the guarantee has expired, so you can forget about sending it back to the manufacturers. In most cases, they won't want to know.

Before packing your computer off to a repair firm, check to see if your local computer dealer can recommend a local repair outfit.

Phone the company you choose and try to get a rough guide of the cost of the repair, how long it will take — and whether they'll give a warranty to do it again for free if the repair doesn't work.

Make sure that the quoted price includes parts, labour, VAT, and return postage.

When sending your computer by post, pack it carefully — preferably in the original box.

Always include a letter with your name, address, and telephone number and the effects of the fault.

Send the whole package by recorded delivery — just 24p on top of the stamp cost — and pay the extra cash for an advice-of-delivery slip (25p if you ask for it when you post the package, 65p if you leave it till later).

That way you know it's got there.

■ A1 Computer Services.
Unit 9, Paddock Mount Offices, Dawley, Telford, Shropshire TF4 3PR (0952) 502737.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED 'Virtually any computer' — including Spectrum, C64/128, BBC, 16-bits, C16, Vic20 and Plus 4.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers; also full disk-drive service for £25.
PRICES Mostly £25-£30, but C128 is £42.50.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ ACE Repairs.
Outways Farm, Pelynt, Looe, Cornwall, PL13 2NW (0503) 20282.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Major makes except Atari ST.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Sinclair Interface 1 and Microdrive, Amstrad disk drives and printers and Commodore disk drives, printers and datacorders.
PRICES From £15 upwards depending on fault.
WARRANTY Six months.
INFORMATION Sinclair, Amstrad and Commodore spares and leads.

■ Ampower Video and Computers.
15A Alcester Rd, Studley, Warks, B80 7AJ (0527) 853374.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All 8-bit and 16-bit machines.
PERIPHERALS Printers, monitors, disk drives etc.
PRICE Phone for information.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ BCL (Best Computers Ltd).
Galaxy Audio Visual, first floor, 230 Tottenham Court Road, London W1A 3AP (01) 631-0139 or 580-6640.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All 8-bit and 16-bit including PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED All.
PRICES A typical small repair would cost £15-£20.
WARRANTY Six months.
INFORMATION Free estimates. Galaxy Audio Visual also sell micros.

■ Cambridge Micro Surgery.
Unit 4, 377B Cherry Hinton Road, Cambridge CB1 4DH (0223) 410234.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C64, BBC, Amstrad, PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors, disk drives etc.
PRICES Cheapest is 48K Spectrum at £18.95 plus cost of parts; others from £23.50.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Will provide annual maintenance for business micros, on a contract basis.

■ The Computer Factory.
Analytic Engineering Ltd, Unit 18A, Grainger Road Industrial Estate, Southend SS2 5DD (0707) 618455.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All major models except Atari.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Disk drives and printers.
PRICES £7-£40.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Free estimates.

■ Electronic & Computer Services.
1000 Uxbridge Road, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 0RL (01) 573-2100.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED The full range of home computers — that includes all the well-known 8-bit and 16-bit machines.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Electronic & Computer Services will repair some peripherals, but write or phone for details in case yours isn't included.
PRICES According to the problem. Phone for a quote.
WARRANTY Write or phone for details. The warranty only covers the problem repaired, not the whole computer.
INFORMATION Turnaround varies, depending on the problem, from two days to a week.
Electronic & Computer Services also sell spare parts. Again, write or phone for details.

■ Hindley Electronics.
97 Market Street, Hindley, Wigan, Lancashire WN2 3AA (0942) 522743.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C16/64, Vic20, CPC.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Some.
PRICES Set price for each machine, ranging from £17 (48K Spectrum) to £25. 1541 disk drives £32.50.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Average two-day turnaround — well quicker than the average.

■ HS Computer Services.
Unit 2, The Orchard, Warton, Preston, Lancashire PR4 1BE (0772) 632686.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All Spectrums.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone.
PRICES From £14.95.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ Hytek Computer (Rentals)
Unit 4C, Yeovale Industrial Estate, Lapford, Crediton, Devon. (03635) 604.
COMPUTER REPAIRED Major makes, including Acorn.
PERIPHERALS Most major makes.
PRICES Fixed price list available on request.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ Ladbroke Computing International.
33 Ormskirk Road, Preston, Lancashire PR1 2QP (0772) 21474 or 27236.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Mainly Atari.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers and disk drives.
PRICES According to machine — for example ST £34.50, XL/130 XE £23 (these prices include VAT).
WARRANTY Phone for information.

■ Microtech Computer Services.
216-219 Cotton Exchange Building, Old Hall Street, Liverpool L3 9LA (051) 236-2208.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED ST, Amiga, BBC, Amstrads.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors; also electric typewriters and other office equipment.
PRICES Start from £30 — call Mike Lopez at Microtech for a quote.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ MP Electronics.
Wendling, Dereham, Norfolk NR19 2LZ (0362) 87327.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, C64, BBC B, PCs — in fact all major makes except ST and Amiga.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, plotters, monitors, disk drives etc.
PRICES All-inclusive prices for most machines — 48K Spectrum £15, 128K Spectrum, BBC B and C64 £27.50, PCs from £20-£100+. These rates cover all faults except those caused by other people's botched repairs!
WARRANTY Phone for information.
INFORMATION Free estimates. £20 repair and overhaul service for 48K Spectrums — MP Electronics replace sockets, keyboard membrane etc and will repair any faults that develop within six months of overhaul.

■ Ortec Micro Computers.
ORC GEC ITEC, GEC Switch Gear, Distribution Division, Higher Openshaw, Manchester M11 1FL (061) 301-2210.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All home micros and PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors and disk drives.
PRICES Depends on fault —

Attention repair firms!

If you would like a mention in the Back Bytes repair pages, please send the relevant details to Back Bytes, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB, including a phone number and the manager's name (for our files).

phone for details.
WARRANTY Three months.

■ RA Electronics.
133 London Road South, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR33 0AX (0502) 566289.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All Spectrums.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone.
PRICES Spectrum 48K £14, Spectrum 128K £20.
INFORMATION RA Electronics also sell components.

■ Roebuck Designs.
Victory Works, Birds Hill, Letchworth, Hertfordshire SG6 1HX (0462) 480723 or 480929.
JOYSTICKS REPLACED Roebuck Designs run a clever joystick-replacement service which offers faster turnaround than a repair firm might.

Send in your broken joystick — any model — and they'll send back a second-hand but working stick of the same model. Later, they repair yours and pass it on to another customer.
PRICE £4.50 including return postage.

■ Telegames.
Kilby Bridge, Wigston, Leicestershire LE8 1TE (0533) 880445 or 813606.
CONSOLES REPAIRED Atari VCS2600, Colecovision, Intellivision, Sega.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone to ask.
PRICES VCS2600 £17.95, Colecovision £14.95, Intellivision £19.95, Sega £14.95.
WARRANTY 90 days.
INFORMATION Telegames promise to return the console to you just three days after they've received it. They're also the official UK repair centre for Sega and Colecovision.

■ Verran Micro-Maintenance.
Albany Park, Frimley Road, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2PL (0276) 66266.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, Amstrad, Commodore.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, monitors.
PRICES Range from £19.95 for Spectrum to £95 for Amstrad PC1512.
INFORMATION Established six years. Approved by Amstrad.

■ Video Vault.
140 High Street West, Glossop, Derbyshire SK13 8HJ (04574) 66555.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Most.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone.
PRICES From £19.95, according to machine.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION While-you-wait service in Manchester.

■ VSE Technical Services.
Unit 6, 8 Nursery Road, London SW9 8BP (01) 738-7707.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All Spectrum, Amstrad, Atari and Commodore models.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Opus Discovery drive (partner Ian Vaudrey is official repair-person for the Sinclair Discovery Club).
PRICES Each model has a set price which covers all repairs except very major ones like keyboard or disk-drive replacement. Spectrums range from £12.90 to £17.90; C64 is £19.90, C128 £24.90; CPCs range from £21.90 to £24.90; all PCWs are £31.90.

Parts, labour, VAT and return postage within the UK are all included.
WARRANTY Four months.

■ Wight Computing Home Micros.
122 High Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 2SU (0983) 68978.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Most.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers and monitors, but check first that the service is available for older models.
PRICES According to the problem.
WARRANTY 90 days.
INFORMATION Wight Computing will also check, clean etc computers which are not obviously faulty.

■ WTS Electronics.
Studio Master House, Chaul End Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire LU4 8EZ (0582) 491949.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED All home computers.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Printers, disk drives, modems etc.
PRICES 'Very competitive on all models.'
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION WTS Electronics promise to complete the repair within one week from the day they receive the machine. Authorised Amstrad/Sinclair repair firm.

■ Wynter Electronics.
Unit 30F, Atlas Village, Oxgate Lane, Staples Corner, London NW2 7HU (01) 452-5660.
COMPUTERS REPAIRED Spectrum, Commodore, BBC, Atari, PCs.
PERIPHERALS REPAIRED Phone for details.
PRICES £18 upward, depending on machine.
WARRANTY Three months.
INFORMATION Repair done in one week.

TOOLBOX ■ Going soft on the hardstuff

SCANNERS

They'll blow your mind

Cameron UK demonstrated their range of document scanners at the recent PC Show in Earls Court. A document scanner digitises documents allowing you to alter them on computer. For instance you could use one to scan a picture from a magazine into your computer to be included in your own artwork or letters etc. There were four scanners on display, ranging from £199 to £678 including one that can scan documents in colour. A graphics package is included with the scanners, and models are available for IBM PCs, Amiga and Atari ST.

CAMERON UK: 108 New Bond Street, London W1. Tel: (01) 499 9192.

PC

Hear me out

PC software developers may be interested in a new development system which allows large amounts of speech to be included in a program at a fraction of the normal memory requirements. AMT's Speech Development System uses special software routines to compress speech to a mere 1% (yes, ONE) of its normal memory space. A 360K disk could hold up to 24 minutes of clear speech, very useful in applications packages where verbal guidance would make using the program much easier. Software that uses AMT's SDS requires a small playback unit attached to the PC before any speech can be heard. The actual development system costs £3000 but prices for the playback unit have yet to be decided.

APPLIED MICROSYSTEMS TECHNOLOGY LTD: 249-251 Cricklewood Broadway, London NW2 6NX. Tel (01) 450 3222.

PC

Knot again

The Executive Knot (as previewed in Toolbox TGM 021) is finally ready to be launched. Described as a Personal Data Manager for the PC it is an all-purpose organiser including diaries, index files, reminders, route planner and many other features. The program also includes a number of enhancements over the original specification. The final version of the Knot will also include a Multiple-Category facility in the Business Card File, which allows a single entry to belong to up to four different categories. The price has also been reduced to £69.99. (Cheaper than any hand-held organiser!)

CARTER FOLLIS SOFTWARE LTD: Sedgeley Road East, Tipton, West Midlands DY4 7UJ. Tel (021) 557 2981.

PC COMPATIBLES

It's the way I play 'em

Dynamics Marketing will shortly be releasing their A-D Games Card for the IBM PC and compatibles. The small circuit board allows a Dynamics Competition Pro PC joystick or any other digital joystick to be used with IBM PCs and compatibles. Prices have yet to be finalised at the time of going to press.

DYNAMICS MARKETING LIMITED: New Coin Street, Royton, Oldham, Lancashire OL2 6JZ. Tel: (061) 626 7222.

ATARI ST

A real...

Budding programmers and users of Incentive's ST Adventure Creator can now add their own program routines to STACed adventures. Incentive will now supply the complete programming documentation for STAC free of charge to any one who sends a SAE.

INCENTIVE SOFTWARE LTD: Zephyr One, Calleva Park, Aldermaston, Berkshire RG7 4QW. Tel: (0734) 817288.

PC

On the right track

PC owners can now replace their mouse and keyboard with a new keyboard complete with built-in trackerball. The trackerball on the Keyboard Plus (£395) is set to emulate the Microsoft serial mouse, but it can be configured to other mouse systems and bitpad protocols. Software is also included so that the user can carry out cursor movement with the trackerball.

PENNY AND GILES COMPUTER PRODUCTS LTD: 1 Airfield Way, Christchurch, Dorset BH23 3TE. Tel: (0202) 481751

PC

Free shares

At the recent PC Show, Folio Shareware gave away hundreds of pounds worth of shareware PC software. A shareware program is usually a demonstration of a much larger program which sells for a low price. It allows the user to test out the program before buying the entire package thus saving costly mistakes. This is a popular method of buying software over in the States and is beginning to catch on over here. For a free 100-page catalogue of PC shareware just send a SAE to the address below.

FOLIO SHAREWARE: Westbrook Works, 140 Thornton Road, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD1 2DX. Tel: (0274) 393679

MUSIC

Space 1999

MCMXCIX have announced a number of new music-related releases. First is a MIDI interface for the IBM PC and compatibles from Dr T. The device costs £125 and includes one MIDI In and one MIDI Out port. Also for the PC is Intro — a two program music package. It includes Prism, a 16-track sequencer, and the Copyist apprentice notation software. Both programs are fully compatible with each other and the combined package retails for £149. MCMXCIX are offering a special PC introductory offer where PC owners can purchase a MIDI interface and the Intro music package for £225.

MCMXCIX: 9 Hatton Street, London NW8 9PR. Tel: (01) 258 3454.

PC

Brentwood bundle

Amstrad have just launched a new bundle for their Sinclair PC200 IBM-compatible computer. The package now includes a printer as well as a mono monitor. The new SP200 printer is 9-pin dot-matrix similar to Amstrad's DMP 3160. It operates at speeds of 160 characters per second when in draft mode and 40 characters per second in near letter quality mode, it's also compatible with programs supporting Epson printers. The new bundle costs £499.

AMSTRAD: Brentwood House, 169 Kings Road, Brentwood, Essex CM14 4EF. Tel: (0277) 230222.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Don't use it in public

Paradise Computers are a new public domain library, specialising in ST public domain software. Their current catalogue includes a variety of graphics and sound demos as well as utilities. As part of their Christmas promotion, Paradise are a giving a way a free condom with all orders received in December. For a full catalogue of titles (software not condoms) send an SAE to the address below.

PARADISE COMPUTERS: 9 Westfield Crescent, Brighton, Sussex BN1 8JB.

JOYSTICKS

Ambistixtrous

We've had them shaped liked grenades and cards, but never before has TGM seen one in the shape of a banana. Joysticks seem to be proliferating at such a rate recently that it's almost time for another joysticks round-up (look out for the January issue, on sale December 7). Spectravideo's Quickshot Flight Controller (£12.50) is designed to be held in both hands, much like handlebars. Spectravideo claim it will 'enable the player to almost forget it is there and appear to play their favourite games by thought alone.' The company also announced the price drop of the Quickshot Turbo to £10.50.

SPECTRAVIDEO: Unit 27, Northfield Industrial Estate, Beresford, Wembley, Middlesex HA0 1NU. Tel: (01) 900 0024.



S.D.C. 60 Boston Road, London, W7 3TR

Other branches – 309 Goldhawk Road, London, W12 8EZ
18 Market Square, Leighton Buzzard, Beds
* Unit 33-34 Romford Shopping Hall, Romford
* 675 Holloway Rd, Archway, London N19
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Office hours 10am - 6pm
5 days

PRICE PROMISE

If you wish to purchase any product from our list and find that you can buy the same product cheaper from another mail order company, simply enclose the lower amount, stating the name of the other company and where you saw the advert. (It must be the current issue). Price Promise does not apply to other companies "Special Offers".

Title	Spectrum	C64	AMS Cass	AMS Disc	ST	Amiga
3D Pool	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
A.P.B.	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	12.99
Action Flight	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
Afterburner	7.25	7.25	5.99	10.50	9.99	9.99
Airborne Ranger	6.99	10.50	10.50	12.95	16.50	N/A
Astaroth	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Balance of Power 1990	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Barbarian II	4.99	4.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	15.99
Batman II	6.50	6.50	6.50	9.99	11.99	14.99
Batman the Movie	6.50	6.50	6.50	10.50	11.99	14.99
Beach Valley	5.99	6.50	6.50	10.50	11.99	14.99
Best of Elite Vol 1	4.99	4.99	4.99	N/A	N/A	N/A
Best of Elite Vol 2	5.99	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Blood Money	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.99	21.99
Bloodwych	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
Carrier Command	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
Chicago 30's	6.99	7.50	7.50	11.25	14.99	14.99

ST Special Offers

Action Service	5.99	Not a Penny More Nor Less	4.99
Alternate Reality	6.99	Peter Beardsleys Int.	8.99
Barbarian	7.99	Purple Saturn Days	9.99
Billiards	4.99	Return of Jedi	9.99
Bubble Ghost	4.99	Shadowgate	9.99
Captain Blood	9.99	Spidertronic	8.99
Empire Strikes Back	9.99	Spitfire 40	5.99
Fernandez must die	5.99	Star Wars	9.99
Get Dexter II	2.99	Sundog	4.99
Gold Rush	13.99	Teenage Queen	7.99
Hot Ball	6.99	The Grail	4.99
Kings Quest IV	14.99	Thrust	3.99
Manhunters	14.99	T.N.T	4.99
Mind Shadow	1.99	Trinity	7.99
Mission Genocide	3.99	Wanted	2.99

Title	Spectrum	C64	AMS Cass	AMS Disc	ST	Amiga
Crazy Cars II	5.99	5.99	5.99	9.99	11.99	14.99
Cybernoid II	5.90	7.25	7.25	10.50	13.99	13.99
Daley's Olympic Challenge	5.99	5.99	5.99	10.50	10.99	14.99
Dominator	8.50	8.50	8.50	12.50	N/A	17.99
Double Dragon	6.50	6.99	6.99	10.99	12.99	12.99
Dragon Ninja	5.50	6.50	6.50	9.99	11.99	14.99
Dragon Spirit	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	15.99
Dynamite Dux	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	15.99
Eliminator	5.50	6.50	6.50	10.50	6.99	6.99
Emlyn Hughes Int Soccer	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.99	N/A	N/A
F-16 Combat Pilot	10.99	10.99	10.99	14.50	15.99	15.99
F-16 Falcon	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14.99	18.99
Falcon Mission Disk	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.99	12.99
Fallen Angel	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	12.99
Football Manager II	5.95	5.95	5.95	10.50	12.99	12.99
Forgotten Worlds	7.50	8.50	8.50	12.50	14.99	14.99
Gary Lineker's Hot Shots	6.50	7.99	7.99	12.50	14.99	14.99
Gemini Wing	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.99	12.99	12.99

Spectrum Special Offers

Arkanoid	3.99	Match Day I	4.99
Armageddon Man	3.99	Megahits	3.99
ATF	3.99	Ms. Pacman	1.99
Barbarian	3.99	Never Ending Story	0.99
Captain Blood	2.99	Pole Position	1.99
Chartbusters	5.99	Quill + Illustrator	7.99
Computer Classics	4.99	Rastan	3.99
Computer Hits III	3.99	Return of the Jedi	4.99
Cybernoid	3.99	Roy of Rovers	3.99
Damned Forest	0.99	Skate Crazy	3.99
Empire Strikes Back	4.99	Star Wars	4.99
Fernandez Must Die	3.99	Sydney Affair	1.99
Gryzer	3.99	The Realm	0.95
Handball	0.99	Trivial Pursuits	5.99
Marauder	3.99	Wizball	3.99

Title	Spectrum	C64	AMS Cass	AMS Disc	ST	Amiga
Grand Prix Circuit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.99	17.99
Gunship	6.95	10.50	10.50	12.99	15.95	15.95
H.A.T.E.	8.50	8.50	8.50	N/A	14.99	17.99
Heat Wave	6.99	6.99	6.99	12.99	N/A	N/A
Hostages	N/A	6.99	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Indiana Jones Last Crusade	7.50	8.50	8.50	12.50	14.99	14.99
Kenny Dalglish Soccer Manager	5.50	6.99	6.99	8.99	12.99	12.99
Kick Off	N/A	6.99	N/A	N/A	12.99	12.99
Last Ninja II	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.99	17.99	17.99
LED Storm	6.99	7.50	7.50	10.99	13.99	16.99
Licence To Kill	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	12.99
Maze Mania	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	N/A	N/A
Microprose Soccer	6.50	10.99	10.99	13.99	15.99	15.99
Millenium 2.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19.99	19.99
Monster	N/A	8.50	N/A	N/A	14.99	14.99
Mr Heli	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
Navy Moves	8.50	8.50	8.50	N/A	14.99	17.99

Title	Spectrum	C64	AMS Cass	AMS Disc	ST	Amiga
Newzealand Story	5.99	6.50	6.50	10.50	11.99	14.99
Obliterator	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.99	15.99	15.99
Operation Neptune	6.50	6.50	6.50	10.99	15.99	15.99
Operation Wolf	5.50	6.50	6.50	10.99	11.99	14.99
Outrun Europa	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.99	11.99
Pac Mania	5.99	5.99	5.99	10.99	9.99	9.99
Pacland	5.99	5.99	5.99	10.99	9.99	9.99
Populous	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.99	16.99
Populous: Promised Lands	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	7.99	7.99
R-Type	7.25	5.99	7.25	10.99	13.99	16.99
R.V.F. Honda	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
RAC Lombard Rally	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Rainbow Island	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
Ralley Cross	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	12.99
Red Heat	5.50	6.50	6.50	9.99	10.99	14.99
Renegade	5.99	5.99	5.99	10.50	11.99	15.99
Renegade III	6.50	6.50	6.50	10.50	10.99	14.99

Amiga Special Offers

3 Stooges	8.99	Kristal	9.99
Action Service	5.99	Manhunter	11.99
Alternate Reality	6.99	Peter Beardsley Int	8.99
Backlash	4.99	Purple Saturn Days	9.99
Bombuzzal	8.99	Return of Jedi	9.99
Captain Blood	9.99	Space Quest II	9.99
Casino Roulette	3.99	Spidertronic	8.99
Driller	8.99	Spitting Images	6.99
Empire Strikes Back	9.99	Star Wars	9.99
Espionage	4.99	Wanted	2.99
Flintstones	4.99	Zynaps	5.99
Hellbend	2.99	**TRIAD**	
Hostages	9.99	**Starglider +**	Only
Hotball	6.99	**Defenders of Crown +**	12.99
King of Chicago	9.99	**Barbarian/Psygnosis**	

Title	Spectrum	C64	AMS Cass	AMS Disc	ST	Amiga
Rick Dangerous	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	N/A	N/A
Robocop	6.50	6.50	6.50	10.50	11.99	14.99
Rocket Ranger	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	18.99
Run the Gauntlet	6.50	6.50	6.50	10.50	11.99	15.99
Running Man	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
Shinobi	6.99	6.99	6.99	N/A	12.99	12.99
Silkworm	6.99	6.99	6.99	N/A	12.99	12.99
Silpheed	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.99	21.99
Sleeping Gods Lie	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14.99	14.99
Speedball	N/A	6.50	N/A	N/A	14.99	14.99
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Stealth Fighter	6.95	10.50	10.50	12.99	15.95	N/A
Steve Davis Snooker	1.99	1.99	1.99	N/A	13.99	13.99
Storm Lord	5.50	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	12.99
Stormtrooper	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	12.99	14.99
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The Real Ghostbusters	7.99	7.99	7.99	12.50	13.99	16.99
The Temple of Flying Saucers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Thunderbirds	8.99	8.99	8.99	10.50	15.99	15.99
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Ultimate Golf	N/A	7.99	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
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Vindicators	6.50	6.50	6.50	10.50	11.99	11.99
Voyager	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	11.99	14.99
WEC Le Mans	6.50	6.50	6.50	9.99	11.99	14.99
War in Middle Earth	6.99	6.99	6.99	12.99	12.99	12.99
Weird Dreams	N/A	6.99	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Xenon II – Megablast	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15.99	19.99
Xenophobe	N/A	6.99	N/A	N/A	15.99	15.99
Xybots	6.99	6.99	6.99	10.50	12.99	12.99
Zak McKracken	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	16.99	16.99
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TGM GUIDE TO SEQUENCERS

Once you've purchased your computer and your MIDI equipment the next step is to buy some software that gets it all talking together. A sequencer is probably the most important piece of music software you will ever buy. Prices range from a few pounds for a simple Public Domain program to hundreds of pounds for the latest state-of-the-art music wonder. The TGM Centre Bytes team explain all you need to know about sequencing.

Basically there are two types of sequencer — hardware and software. The hardware variety are self contained boxes which are dedicated to sequencing. These used to be relatively simple devices that would allow you to record a short sequence of notes into the device's memory and then play it back exactly as it was originally played — rather like a tape recorder. More sophisticated machines allowed you to correct timing errors and chain sequences together. Computers have revolutionised sequencing.

The modern day sequencer still features those essential functions but has been greatly expanded to become a major compositional tool. Hardware sequencers have also improved but not at the same rate or standard. They are now mainly used for live performances where computers can't stand up to the rigours of touring. Since you're going to try and use a computer whenever possible — to keep the cost of your MIDI setup down — this article will only concern itself with software sequencers, though much of it is relevant to hardware sequencers.

Picking well

When choosing your sequencer there are a number of criteria to bear in mind which will make your choice easier.

Music is normally recorded on different tracks to a tape machine with, for example, the bassline on one track, the lead on the next and so on. This allows you to alter the contents of any one track without interfering with all the others — so you don't have to rerecord the whole song because there's a problem with the drums. Sequencers also use tracks to record but instead of recording onto tape you record into the computer's memory. So it's important to pinpoint how many tracks you will require. Take into account not only the MIDI equipment you presently own but also any MIDI equipment you may be planning to buy in the future. If the sequencer can merge tracks all the better — this, in theory, gives you an unlimited number of tracks.

Perhaps the next most important thing to consider is your level of keyboard skills. Basically there are two methods of recording music data into a sequencer.

Realtime recording is where you physically play your music into the sequencer then use software options to correct small timing errors and piece the song together. This is a very quick method of recording if you're reasonably good at playing in time. However, if your keyboard skills aren't up to much you can still make complex-sounding music.

Steptime recording is where you enter music into the computer note by note, using either the keyboard or the mouse. This is often a laborious process. Most sequencers allow you to enter information using either method but tend to be biased in favour of realtime recording.

Console emulation

If you've never used a sequencer before it's best to start off with a cheap one, just to familiarize yourself with sequencing procedures. Also bear in mind how easy the program is to use. The biggest problem with sequencers is that no-one is quite sure who they're aimed at. While most claim to be the musicians' favourite, not every musician will admit to being enamoured with the things. In professional music studios it is usually the studio engineer who handles all the computers and software as well as the mixing console. Consequently, most sequencers try to emulate a modern recording console, complete with Play, Record, Fast Forward and Rewind options. So they seem to be aimed more at the engineer rather than the musician. Sequencers are extremely useful tools but it's very easy to get bogged down in all the terminology.

However, there are demo versions of most sequencers available for a low price. These are usually fully working copies but with the save options disabled. So wherever possible invest in one of these demo disks to find the sequencer that suits your own personal requirements.

The sequencer market is already swamped with a variety of packages. The ST market, in particular, is saturated with a variety of sequencers covering every conceivable feature (mainly due to its MIDI ports, however the Amiga is rapidly catching up). Obviously we can't review each one here, there just isn't time or space. Hopefully this article and the sequencer reviews featured here will serve to help you choose your own sequencer by explaining just what to look out for.

PRESS ANY KEY

GLOSSARY

PRODUCER: Who to contact if you're interested in any particular program.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Minimum requirement to get the music program up and running.
TRACKS: The number of tracks available for information.
PPQN: Pulse Per Quarter Note. Refers to the note duration values recognised by the program. Whenever you play a note it is played for a specific amount of time. How long this is depends on a combination of song tempo (the overall speed of the song) and individual note duration value (remember your crochets and quavers from school music lessons?). The higher the number the wider the range of duration values available to the user. So a PPQN of 24 allows for 24 consecutive notes of equal duration value every quarter note or 96 consecutive notes of equal duration value every whole note.
MIDI FILTERS: When you're playing a sequence on your keyboard, you don't always want the computer to record all the MIDI information it receives. MIDI functions such as pitchbend and aftertouch can take up great chunks of memory. MIDI filters clean out unwanted information and allow you to tell the computer exactly what type of information you want it to record.
DATA REPRESENTATION: How MIDI information is displayed onscreen. There are basically three methods. A simple datastream uses numbers to show note on and note off information along with pitch, octave etc. Not very user friendly. If you're going to do a lot of steptime editing it's best to avoid programs that only display note information in this manner. It's hard to get an idea of how a piece of music sounds from a string of numbers.

Other programs use some sort of graphical means to display data. This often takes the form of bar charts. In the case of note information, note length is represented by bar length. If you can't read music this gives you an at a glance idea of how the music sounds.

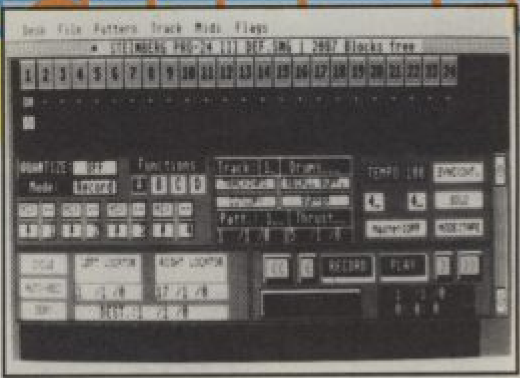
Finally there's traditional music notation. This went out of favour for quite a while, since it was all the vogue to play an instrument but not understand music theory. Music notation has only recently started to be heavily featured in sequencing programs. If you've had any music training it immediately makes the program more friendly. If you don't understand music notation it's worth spending a little time learning note pitch and duration values because you will find it helps you write your own music if you can understand a piece of sheet music.
ARRANGEMENT: How sequences are arranged into a song. Different sequencers feature different ways of piecing songs together.
QUANTIZATION: Virtually all sequencers feature some sort of quantization commands. These are used to correct your playing errors and bring your sequence back in time. It works by moving the position of a note slightly towards the next beat in the bar or slightly back towards the last beat. Usually you can define the amount of movement, such as quantize to the nearest 16th note etc. However, quantization doesn't always achieve the results you want. If your playing is particularly bad, the computer may not move the note in the direction that you want — it just moves the note to the nearest value specified by the user in either direction. Some of the high-end sequencers feature intelligent quantization commands which recognise your style of play (such as consistently playing behind the beat) and quantize accordingly.
TGM GUIDE: What we thought of the program. Taking into account ease of use, price and features.

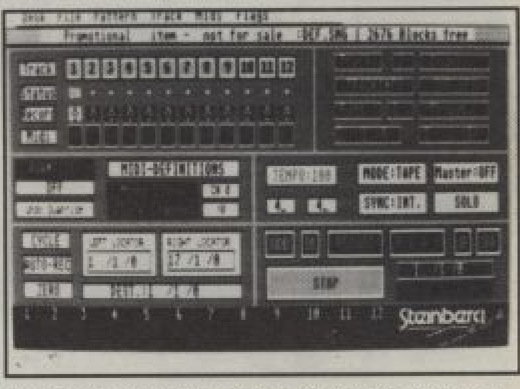
TITLE: Midistudio
PRODUCER: Ladbrooke Computing International: 33 Ormskirk Road, Preston PR1 2QP. Tel: (0722) 203166.
PRICE: £99.95.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Atari 520ST.
TRACKS: 20 polyphonic tracks. You can only record on one track at a time. Tracks can be merged together but all information on a particular track will broadcast on one MIDI channel only.
PPQN: 24.
MIDI FILTERS: Note on/off, pitchbend, aftertouch, program changes and control changes.
DATA REPRESENTATION: Datastream.
QUANTIZATION: Several levels of quantization. Works on phrase currently being edited. To combat editing mistakes a copy of the current phrase can be copied temporarily to the buffer. Staccato and legato options to lengthen and shorten notes.
ARRANGEMENT: Songs are arranged by recording separate phrases which are then linked together to form a track. This is a very flexible method of recording and allows for quick remixes — once all your phrases have been recorded they can then be reordered ad infinitum until you've got a mix which you like. However, there are a maximum of just 100 phrases (though individual phrases can be up to 647 bars long). If you're used to recording short sequences you will rapidly use up the available phrases. You can get round this by appending phrases to end of another phrase thus creating one bigger phrase but this detracts from the flexibility of remixing. It would have been better to link the number of available phrases to the amount of free memory.
TGM GUIDE: Midistudio's one big plus is that it is very easy to use. The main screen is laid out like a mixing console. Each of the 20 tracks has its own volume fader which can be adjusted during playback. The program itself isn't particularly sophisticated. Many sound modules now include percussion sections yet, surprisingly, there's no drum grid. Entering drums as note values is a real pain. Also you can't cycle record, ie loop a particular section of the music and record at the same time. Generally, though, not a bad sequencer. £99 seems to be a bit much to pay but it's definitely better value for money than Steinberg's Pro 12 which is £30 dearer.

TITLE: Pro 12
PRODUCER: Steinberg. Distributed in the UK by Evenlode Soundworks: The Studios, Church Street, Stonesfield, Oxford OX7 2PS. Tel: (099 389) 8484.
PRICE: £129.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Atari 520ST.
TRACKS: 12 polyphonic tracks. You can only record on one track at a time.
PPQN: 24
MIDI FILTERS: Any MIDI information.
DATA REPRESENTATION: Note information is represented by traditional music notation. It's a far better method than just plain datastreams but it can be a bit confusing when used for drum patterns (each drum sound occupies a different pitch value). A drum grid would have been nice.
QUANTIZATION: Very simple. Corrects notes to the nearest quantization value.
ARRANGEMENT: Songs are created by chaining patterns together. There are no facilities to merge tracks. So you're stuck with the basic twelve tracks.
TGM GUIDE: Pro 12 is little brother to the impressive Pro 24 and is upwardly compatible with it. The program itself is a bit basic. Steinberg seem to be cashing in on their own good name. There are no particularly impressive editing functions or anything to

distinguish this from other cheaper sequencers. It's a shame it doesn't incorporate more of Pro 24's features. Definitely overpriced for what you get.

TITLE: Pro 24
PRODUCER: Steinberg. Distributed in the UK by Evenlode Soundworks: The Studios, Church Street, Stonesfield, Oxford OX7 2PS. Tel: (099 389) 8484
PRICE: £300.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Atari ST with a minimum of 1Mb RAM.
TRACKS: 24 polyphonic tracks. You can only record on one track at a time. However, there is a multiple recording option which is used in conjunction with cycled recording. You can record on up to four tracks at the same time. If you use this you will record the same information on each of the four tracks — useful if you want four instruments to play the same sequence. Should you be running low on tracks there is a mix down option. This merges several tracks together. The new track will playback with all the different parts sent to different MIDI channels just like they were on separate tracks. So, in theory, you can keep bouncing tracks together infinitely — without any loss of sound quality.
PPQN: 24.
MIDI FILTERS: Any kind of MIDI data can be filtered.
DATA REPRESENTATION: Datastreams, graphic blocks and a rudimentary form of music notation. There's also a drum grid editor. First of all you tell the computer which note on your sampler, sound module, etc is which drum sound. From then on you don't have to worry about note numbers etc, you can identify your instruments by





Steinberg Pro 12: overpriced little brother to the much more impressive Steinberg Pro 24 (top); both for the Atari ST

Realtime — The Intelligent Sequencer

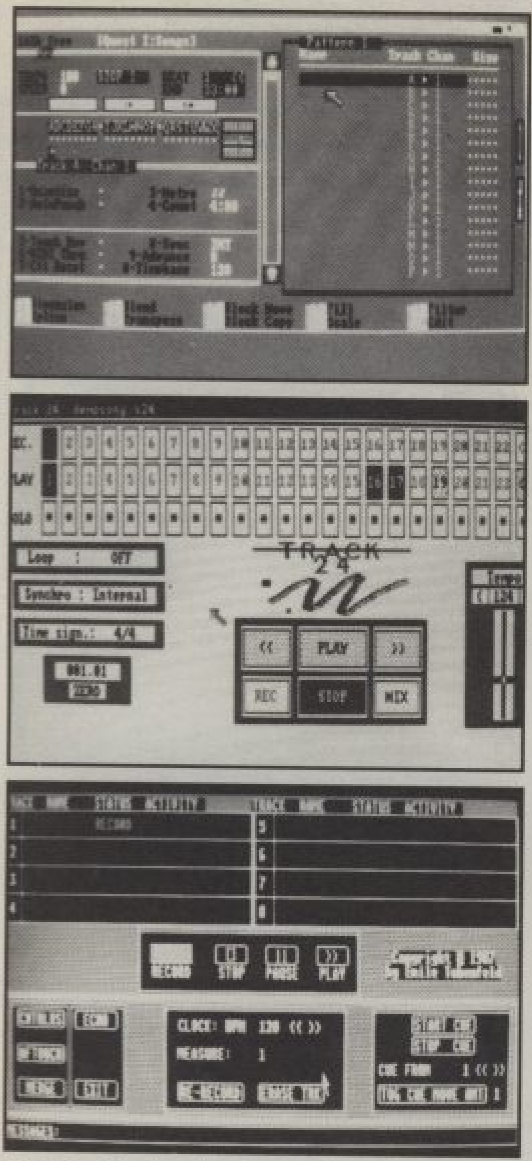
PRODUCER: Intelligent Music. Marketed in the UK by MCMXCIX: 9 Hatton Street, London NW8 8PR. Tel (01) 724 4104.
PRICE: £249.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Atari 520ST.
TRACKS: 256! There are no merge track functions but then again are you ever going to need them?
PPQN: 192.
MIDI FILTERS: Any MIDI information.
DATA REPRESENTATION: All data is shown as a combination of written data, bar graphs and icons. The screen tends to look a bit cluttered and confusing but is actually very easy to understand.
QUANTIZATION: You can global quantize an entire section or just quantize notes within particular parameters. For instance you can quantize all notes which aren't within eight pulses of an eighth note. Any notes that aren't within this range will be pulled into range, while those that are already within eight pulses of an eighth note will remain unaffected. This allows you to tighten up the timing on sequences without making them sound too mechanical.
ARRANGEMENT: Realtime doesn't use the phrase method of assembling songs as used by Pro 24. Instead, sections are linked together to form a finished piece. A section can be any length and include up to 256 tracks of information. So section one may be the song's intro while section two maybe the verse and so on.
TGM GUIDE: Realtime is marvellous. It features some very powerful functions. It's impossible to go into detail about all its features, because there are too many to mention, but here are a few that stuck out as particularly impressive.
Steptime editing is performed by `painting' notes into a track. You first type in the pitch on the keyboard (such as c3 for the pitch C in the third octave) then select a velocity from the velocity palette and paint your note onto the screen. There's also an option called point record. Using the mouse you pinpoint the position within the sequence where you wish to start recording then play the notes or chords on a MIDI keyboard. There isn't really much of distinction between steptime or realtime input. Tracks can be constructed using both methods without having to switch through numerous menus.

Rather than thinking in terms of MIDI channels, Realtime thinks in terms of MIDI devices. You program in a device definition for a particular instrument: setting your FZ10M sampler to receive on channel one, for instance. So whenever you want to record a FZ10M track just use the FZ10M device definition to set everything up for recording. This is a much more sensible approach, rather than trying to memorize which device is responding to which channel, allowing you to forget all about such things and get on with making music. You can also set up drumkit device lists. You type in the names of the drums down the left-hand side of the screen and then the pitches that the drum responds to on the right. So whenever you want to use your bassdrum you just open a track called bassdrum and you're set to record.
Alternatively you can open up a synthesizer device list and program chords to respond to a single event within the section window. Once you've set up your device lists they can be saved to disk for future use.

Fill commands can be used to vary your basic sequence patterns. The user sets up a basic framework for tracks and Realtime fills in notes between. The computer doesn't so much as write music for you randomly but places notes between two points based on the parameters you set. So you can define the type of notes that will appear and the density (ie, the chance that a fill will occur at a particular point). This is a great way of writing varying drum patterns and is also useful for music too.

By putting the emphasis on instruments rather than MIDI channels and increasing the number of tracks to such a high number, Intelligent Music have designed a program for people who think in terms of music rather than technology. You never have to worry if there are enough tracks or if you're sending information down the correct MIDI channel because everything is taken care of. The variety of ways that information is displayed takes some getting used to but it's one of the better systems and works well with both music and drums. This short review just scratches the surface. Beg, borrow or steal £249 and find out the joys of Realtime for yourselves.

PRESS ANY KEY



Two for the Amiga: Quest 1 (top) is let down by its manual, and offers less for the price than Track 24 (centre); and one for Amiga and ST — Dr T's MIDI Recording Studio (bottom) — great for low-budgets.

name. You then place rhombus symbols on a grid to arrange a drum sequence. The shade of the symbols indicates the velocity (volume) that the drum is played at.
QUANTIZATION: There are a variety of quantize options. Over quantize recognises your playing style and quantizes accordingly. It also recognises chords and quantizes using the same method. Length size only alters the length of a note while fixed length gives all notes the same length. You can also lengthen or shorten the note length to the quantization value.
ARRANGEMENT: Pro 24 can be used as a virtual tape recorder for jotting down music ideas. Alternatively, songs can be created by arranging sequences/phrases. A single track can hold multiple patterns broadcast across multiple MIDI channels.
TGM GUIDE: This is one of the industry standard music packages used by many recording studios. The options are very impressive. If you own this you are unlikely to ever need or want another sequencer. There is a logical edit screen which can produce some very interesting functions. This allows you to carry out arithmetic operations on particular notes or MIDI events. First you define what part of a sequence is to be affected, such as all notes or notes within a particular range. You can then carry out a number of alterations on these notes like changing the volumes, note lengths, note position etc. Basically you choose what aspect of a note you wish to alter then enter a number (such as increase/decrease value by three, multiply/divide value by four etc). Mucking about with this can create some very interesting music pieces as well as a lot of rubbish.

Perhaps the most annoying aspect of Pro 24 is the options — there are just so many. It can take a good deal of time to find your way around the program without using the manual. Beginners will almost certainly find it daunting to use. Unfortunately, the price tag of £300 will put it beyond the means of most budget musicians. Only buy if you're really serious about sequencing and own enough MIDI equipment to exploit its capabilities.

TITLE: MIDI Recording Studio
PRODUCER: Dr T's. Available in the UK from Miditech: The Colosseum, Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AW. Tel: (0532) 446520.
PRICE: £49.95.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Atari 520 ST. Amiga A500 with MIDI interface.
TRACKS: Eight polyphonic tracks.
PPQN: 96.
MIDI FILTERS: None.
DATA REPRESENTATION: Datastream.
QUANTIZATION: None.
ARRANGEMENT: The program acts like a tape recorder — recording tracks rather than phrases. However, sequences can be recorded into the middle of a track and there are various cut and paste commands to move parts or sequences around or between tracks.
TGM GUIDE: MRS is regarded in the music world as a valuable program for musicians on a tight budgets. As such it uses the internal sound chips as well as MIDI — useful if you only have a limited polyphony MIDI keyboard. On the Amiga you can import IFF samples of which there is a vast library. The sequencer itself is fine, restricted mainly by the lack of tracks and the unfriendly use of datastream note representation. One of the more novel features is Time Reverse. This reverses the note order so that the sequence will play backwards. A good first sequencer.

TITLE: Track 24
PRODUCER: Musilog. Available in the UK from Miditech: The Colosseum, Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AW. Tel: (0532) 446520.
PRICE: £75.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Amiga A500 with MIDI interface.
TRACKS: 24. Track 23 is reserved for chords, with 24 reserved for melodies which only record monophonic sequences. Tracks can also be mixed together to free up other tracks.
PPQN: 48.
MIDI FILTERS: Pitchbend, control changes, program changes and aftertouch. Drum record is used when recording drums from a keyboard etc. These drums are often short samples which don't respond to note duration values. Drum record filters out note duration values.
DATA REPRESENTATION: Traditional music notation.
QUANTIZATION: There are two sorts. Quantization of note position (where it begins) and quantization of note length.
ARRANGEMENT: Rather than using the usual phrase method of song arrangement, Track 24 operates just like a tape recorder. You either record an entire track at a time or you can break a track into shorter sequences and place them one after another on the same track. The program thinks in terms of tracks — if you chain several sequences together on the same track the computer will view that track as one sequence. Punch In/Outs are available. These act as an insert function. The user specifies the start position for the insert (punch in) and the end point (punch out). Once a sequence has been recorded it will be inserted between these two points. This method isn't particularly flexible if you want to remix your song. However, you can copy and move specific parts of a track by defining that sequence as a block.
TGM GUIDE: Track 24 goes to show that the Amiga is capable of running very good MIDI software. The program is very easy to use. The manual is only 36 pages long yet doesn't skimp on information. In no time at all you're creating your own sequences without having to go through any lengthy setup procedures. One useful feature of Track 24 is the MIDI dump facility. This allows you to store all your voice data from your synthesizer on disk. This is very useful if you use lots of different sounds for each song. You can store all your sounds on disk then recall them when needed for a particular song.

TITLE: Quest 1
PRODUCER: Sound Quest. Available in the UK from Miditech: The Colosseum, Cookridge Street, Leeds LS2 3AW. Tel: (0532) 446520.
PRICE: £129.
SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS: Amiga A500 with MIDI interface.
TRACKS: 24 polyphonic tracks.
PPQN: 24.
MIDI FILTERS: All MIDI information.
DATA REPRESENTATION: Datastream.
QUANTIZATION: Quantize note position only.
ARRANGEMENT: Sequences are stored as phrases which are then chained together to form a track. 96 phrases are available for each track giving a total of 2304 different sequences spread across 24 tracks.
TGM GUIDE: The manual really lets this sequencer down. It's printed in very small black print which isn't very readable. The manual itself isn't particularly friendly to use. There's a tutorial at the beginning to get new users started but the manual could have done with a few more examples to illustrate more of the options. Using the sequencer can be a bit tricky at first, mainly due to the manual. The program includes all the basic sequencing functions but doesn't represent as good value for money as Track 24.

★★ AMAZING ★★

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POWERPLAY HOTLINE QUIZ

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Postcode..

Colour of Joystick required (red/green)................



READERPAGE

STAR LETTER

'It seems to me that the only difference between men and women is their physical bodies, not their brain power...'
...writes **Wendy Adams of Worthing**. She and many other female readers wrote in to support Samantha Brydon whose letter in TGM022 accused the software industry of being sexist. Wendy also wins herself £50-worth of software.

Sex, lies and video games

Dear TGM
I read with interest the letter you printed in Issue 22 by a woman! I agree with Samantha when she says the computer industry is sexist. It seems to me that the only difference between men and women is their physical bodies, not their brain power.

I am a woman, and I read computer magazines, use bulletin boards and play multi-user games. I also program and I am damn good at it. Let me tell you a story. A short while ago I wrote a program, quite a good game I was told, and I sent it off to two, so-called major companies. One told me 'it's no good, stick to word processing and clerical work' and I got no reply at all from the other one. Two months later I sent the same program to the same companies signed in a male name and, lo and behold, a contract came through my door!! Now this may be bad news but am I the only one this had happened to? I think not!

I am desperately trying to scrape together the money for a bulletin board, my one ambition, and if I contact companies to sponsor me I get laughed at. Doesn't any company out there trust a woman? I know my board would be a success, what a novelty huh! How many women run, or even use, boards? If we do, we run the risk of obscene messages being left for us and no-one treats us as just another user.

Now, come on, we are no different to men, and we should be treated the same, encouraged to use computers, and not stay in front of a typewriter all day and the sink at night!!
Wendy Adams, Worthing.

Letters of the month usually annoy at least one person in the TGM office. But this time we can do no more than agree with you, Wendy. Out of interest, perhaps you'd like to tell us what the game was — not another hero-rescuing-maiden game, surely?

Historical accidents

Dear TGM
For some time now it has been the aim of Audiogenic to produce software that will appeal to people of both sexes, and I think it is true to say that programs like Impact and Helter Skelter have a very general appeal.

At the same time, we cannot afford to ignore the existing profile of the games software market, which is overwhelmingly male. Equally, TGM and other computer magazines must to an extent address themselves to the vast majority of their readership.
Nevertheless, the time is overdue for change.

I believe that the male domination of the computer games market is nothing more than a historical accident. The very first home computers came as kits and needed to be programmed in machine code, so tended to sell to electronics freaks, radio hams and people with nothing better to do in the evenings. All three categories were almost exclusively male.

These people wrote the first computer programs, contributed to the first computer magazines, and opened the first computer shops. It isn't surprising, therefore, that even though there is a much more representative mix of people in the industry today, it is still male-dominated, and unless some concerted action is taken I can see it remaining that way.

What can be done? I'd like to see a regular column in every computer magazine written by a woman journalist and addressed specifically at the female readership. That way a girl who reads her brother's magazine, or a woman who reads her husband's magazine will not feel totally ignored. I'd also like to see more about computers in girls' comics and teen magazines — even in women's magazines.
Eventually, I could imagine that there might even be entire magazines aimed at female computer enthusiasts — but that's probably a long way off.

Computer mags can also help by discouraging — if not actually banning — gratuitously sexist adverts, and on the editorial side by frowning on blatant sexism in games (as some mags already do).
Software publishers will help if they remember that a product which appeals to girls as well as boys has twice the potential market. Computer owners can help by encouraging their sisters, girlfriends, wives and mothers to think of a home computer as something for the entire family.

It isn't surprising that the world of computers is (like so many other areas) dominated by men — but it also wouldn't be surprising if one day that changed. After all, 70 years ago women were not allowed to vote; 30 years ago married women were expected not to work; only 10 years ago there had never been a woman Prime Minister.
Peter Calver, Managing Director, Audiogenic Software

Although we all realise that those Audiogenic classics, Impact and Helter Skelter, can be played by both sexes, isn't this the same company that sold Emlyn Hughes International Soccer and is currently promoting Lone Wolf with an advert depicting a muscle-bound, blonde barbarian? How about Jillian Hipsey's International Netball, Peter?

There is a saviour

Dear TGM
I am writing in response to Samantha Brydon's letter which you printed in the September issue, and more particularly to a couple of your own comments about that letter.

You said that there are no female programmers. Well, there are a few, and some of them are very good indeed. The most recent game by a woman I am aware of is Linda Wright's The Jade Stone (which incidentally, was a CRASH Smash). I think one of the problems here is that women programmers tend to be discouraged precisely because they are not highlighted.

I think the fundamental thing wrong with all these arguments is that they try to rationalise the lack of women in computing (both as producers and consumers) by seeing it as somehow our own fault, or as the natural state of things. Looking at the issues from the angle of some of the women currently voicing their anger at the industry and you see a different story — one where we are actively excluded by software companies who insist on the 'rescue your girlfriend' formula (a bit alienating for women don't you think?), and magazines who are happy to publish blatantly sexist advertising — I could go on!

However, there is light at the end of the tunnel. There is a group called OASIS (Organisation Against Sexism In Software), which by pure coincidence, I run. Membership is open to anyone with an anti-sexist interest. Maybe, one day, OASIS won't have to exist, but for now I would like to say that we women are out here, and we would like some service from the magazines please!

Sandra Vogel, Wimbledon.

OASIS can be contacted at: 3 Alden Court, Stanley Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8RD. Yearly membership is just £3 (£5 overseas). Cheques payable to Sandra Vogel. Both sexes are invited to join!

A whiter shade of pale

Dear TGM

I am black and I own an Atari ST. I am writing to complain about all computer games, they all suffer from a common problem: there are absolutely NO black sprites! None! Zero, zip, nought. I recently went round the West End to see if I could find a single game with black heroes. I could only find ones with black people as the enemies (witness Double Dragon and Red Heat). In Double Dragon they have the typical black stereotype — lips covering half their faces.

All games have this racial setback, and it's not only computers! I regularly read comix, namely 2000 AD, and these also have next to no black characters ('cept Clinton).

And congratulations to Samantha Brydon, I completely agree with her.

Benjamin Newman, London.

As an avid reader of 2000 AD I would have thought that you'd have heard of Crisis and the Third World War strip, which features an almost entirely black cast.

TGM would also remind you that Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge features the man himself in glorious black (although the previous game had him with white pixels). Although, admittedly, black characters in games are even rarer than black stars in films — and that's saying something. But it's also worth remembering that the fault often lies with the coin-op companies — perhaps, if something is done at source, the computer software producers would stand a chance.

Male stripper

Dear TGM

To censor software because it may be sexist would be like a vegetarian having all cattle killed to prevent people eating beef. Everyone has their own taste. If Dominic Andoh wants to pay out his cash for that kind of software he has a right to do so and nobody has a right to stop him. If Samantha Brydon wants to complain about it she has a right to do so, and nobody has a right to stop her. Everyone has their own opinions and are entitled to them. Samantha's letter was actually very good, but I believe she shouldn't take your comments so seriously. And if you believe the comments are truthful, why lie about it.

I've got a coloured friend who I occasionally call 'chalkie', does that make me racist? He doesn't think so, as he knows it's just in fun. By the way, and specifically for Samantha, Strip Poker II+ has data disks with male models available. (Why don't you review that and then see what response you get?)

Sexism against females in software adverts is tiny compared to the sexism against males. It's us guys who should take umbrage, as the majority of games adverts feature a cross between Conan, Rambo and James Bond; muscles bulging out of trousers, single-handedly wiping out an alien mega-advanced race. Now that takes the piss more than a 40-inch pair of tits. Virtually all villains in games are male. All male heroes are murderers. And I know for sure that if a woman gets captured by a firey dragon, I'm not going to get her, whether she flashes a nipple or not.

Games allow you to be a hero, live out fantasies, so don't spoil the fun (for some). It's not as if the pixels are accurate or if you see anything you can't on telly or in the papers. What's so wrong! (Mind you, Mutant Sex Fiends From Mars could be a real eye-opener.)

CS Cooper, Dorset.

Sheer inspiration

Dear TGM

What really inspired me to write to you were the Our Man In Japan articles. Issue 21's article was awesome but this month's is mega awesome — I own a Famicom as well as an Engine.

Anyway I've got nothing more to say other than to keep up your good work.

Kenneth Chow, Scotland.

Sorry you missed it last issue (space restrictions, y'know), but this month Shintaro Kanaoya gets double the space. *Turn to page 17 for all the latest info from the Far East.*

Fancy a date

Dear TGM

I have been a coin-op addict for ten years. Coin-ops have progressed from the early days of Pac-Man and Space Invaders etc to the more modern Hard Drivin' and Strider etc. I still have an old Atari VCS 2600 and was wondering if you have any information on release dates for the Konix Multi System, Atari Lynx and the PC Engine? I've been considering purchasing an Engine through mail order, but I'd like to know if NEC are officially releasing it in UK chainstores?

Just one more thing will there be 16-bit versions of Galaga 88, Super Mario Bros and the new Sega coin-op, Super Monaco Grand Prix?

J Murphy, Avon.

The Konix Multi System should be out in early November, although it's touch and go at the moment, but certainly for Christmas. Atari's new handheld, the Lynx, is scheduled for around February of next year. The PC Engine is unlikely to be launched officially in the UK, although it is possible to get one from your local computer shop (Centresoft are now distributing them through the independent retailers), through Hamleys or the Virgin Games Centre in London.

Although Galaga 88 was a tremendous hit on the PC Engine, it's probably too late for a 16-bit version now. Super Mario Bros is in the same boat, plus the fact that Nintendo want everybody to buy their console to play it on! Super Monaco Grand Prix is likely to be coming from either US Gold or Activision — probably the latter. No release dates yet.

Titbits

Dear TGM

I don't suppose I'm the only person who has noticed, but I've written anyway.

On the subscription page (TGM022) the subs form invites you to subscribe to Zzap! Weird eh?

Yours observantly

James Dobson, Somerset.

Huh, there's always one. Due to technical difficulties...

Dear Mr Editor

I don't agree with the cutting down of trees as my dog, Benny, lives in a tree house. If too many trees are cut down, his might be one of them and he could fall and hurt himself.

Paul Robertshaw, Doncaster.

You forgot something

Dear TGM

I liked the emulation article in the September issue. However, you did forget some crucial points on the ST side.

1 There is another Mac emulator which is supposedly magnificent. It's called the Troika and is available from Condor Computing (Tel: 01 828 9755).

2 In Mac mode the program works 20% faster because the ST has a faster version of 68000 CPU.

3 There is also another MS-DOS emulator on the ST called PC Speed. The Norton speed is about 4.

4 Did you know that there is a Sinclair QL emulator as well? It works several times faster than the original QL.

Well, that's all. Keep up the non-games articles: ST and

PRESS ANY KEY

Amiga owners aren't just monotone gamers!
Jay Lee, The Netherlands.

Well, we're speechless. You learn something new every issue. Thanks.

Just a few things

Dear TGM
With the arrival of the new STE, I want to know what Atari will do about existing ST owners. Will there be any upgrade system if you own the existing ST, as sooner or later this computer will be phased out? If not, don't you think Atari are neglecting the people who made the ST so popular in Britain?

When will the 16-bit Nintendo console be released and how much will it cost?

Will the price of consoles come down next year? Is it worth waiting for 16-bit Nintendo?

Is there a CD-ROM available for the Amiga?

Will there be any games out soon that will make full use of the A590 hard drive? Is there any chance of a price decrease around Christmas?

You mentioned in TGM022 that you are 'slightly biased towards 16-bit'. If so, have you thought of a cover disk, which many mags are doing now? You could also do a tape for 8-bitters — so everyone is happy.

Public domain is free, right? So why does it cost roughly £3 per disk. You can buy disks for about £1, packaging and stamps cannot be more than 50p. That's £1.50!?

That's it... I think! Keep up the good work.
Alastair Canter, Lancashire.

We spoke to Atari and they announced the launch of the STE in November/December with upgrades for 1040ST owners in January of next year.

Shintaro spoke to Nintendo in Japan and they said that their 8-bit launch in the UK and Europe has been so mucked up already that they won't be looking at releasing the 16-bit till at earliest Christmas 1990. If you want a console soon your only real choice is the Konix Multi System, Sega Master System or PC Engine. If you can wait till mid-1990 the new Sega Mega Drive is to be launched in the UK from Virgin Mastertronic. Prices are unlikely to fall this year.

There's no CD-ROM available for the Amiga. The new hard drive for the Amiga is unlikely to get support immediately, it's up to us to buy them, then people will start producing software (hopefully). Prices drops are unlikely at this early stage.

Cover tapes and disks are always being contemplated. But we feel that such things detract from the editorial content of the magazine. Anything that TGM sticks on the front cover would be an extension of the magazine's editorial (we're not in the software business!). We still feel that people buy TGM to get information, when this changes so will we.

Public Domain is sort of free. The companies that sell the software have to cover other costs too: electricity, phones, staff, literature. As you can imagine, it all adds up!

GRAB IT
TGM (Issue 21)

Three lucky winners of the digitising competition each receive a Xerox print of Michelle Petiffer in the Witches of Eastwick.
Jamie Tudor, York YO3 0BS; Robert Barker, Bedford MK41 7HU; Brett Patterson, Sheffield S2 5SB.

GAMES MASTER JACKPOT
TGM (Issue 21/22)

Wow! The two winners each receive £1,000. They are **Thomas King from Nottingham** and **Raheil Mehdi from Middlesbrough.**

BEACHES
TGM (Issue 20)

25 winners receive a copy of Bette Midler's Beaches soundtrack.
Matthew Adams, Great Yarmouth NR31 7PW; David Coverley, Redcar TS11 6DG; Lou Gurney, Shrewsbury, Shrops; David Barnett, Reading RG3 5YL; John Shearing, Godstone RH9 8NE; Anna Wardle, Edinburgh Scotland; Erol Ismael, London SE4 2DR; Johnson Tang, Cardiff CF2 4NL; Roger Betts, Exeter Devon; Paul Taylor, Oakham LE15 7AU; Steve Lee, Guilford GU2 5UT; Grant Robson, Bridge of Weir PA11 3EF; Pierre Scotney, Bristol BS20 3BQ; Guy Hopkins, Formbyn L37 1NX; John F Guthrie, Bolton BL2 6EX; Lee Theasby, Hartlepool TS25 5EZ; L Rigden, Faversham ME13 8HP; Howard Thorpe, Southampton SO1 8AX; Michael Vaughan, Telford Shrops; Paul Hobbs, Southampton SO1 5RP; Mark Yates, Ilkeston DE7 5FB; Carl Baker, Swindon Wilts; C O'Dwyer, London SE6 1SW; Dave Jackson, Preston PR1 8HX; Mal Statham, Blackburn, Lancashire.

EX WHY BOTS
Domark (Issue 22)

A Walmsley of South Humberside receives the original, framed artwork by Steiner Lund.
Ten runners-up each receive a copy of Xybots.
Carl Surry, Herts EN5 2BQ; John Stringer, Manchester M6 8HC; Carl Yu, Liverpool L6 3AQ; P Rushton, Shropshire TF9 3DX; D J Fisk, Kent TN11 9EH; P S Bradley, N Humberside HU17 0NY; Hans-Olof Svensson, Sweden; Steven Martin, London N13 5DT; A Danek, Berkshire RG12 4RT; David Shrimpton, Surrey RH2 0LG.

CURRENT TICKLERS

Here's the current top ten often fave games at Newsfield. So that includes all those folk from CRASH and ZZAP, too. You can't get more definitive than that!

1
Kick Off (Anco)
ALL FORMATS

2
Batman _ The Movie
(Ocean) ALL FORMATS

3
The Untouchables (Ocean)
ALL FORMATS

4
The New Zealand Story
(Ocean) ALL FORMATS

5
APB (Tengen/Domark)
ALL FORMATS

6
Strider (US Gold
ALL FORMATS

7
Xenon II (Mirrorsoft)
ST, AMIGA

8
Blood Money (Psygnosis)
ST, AMIGA

9
Rick Dangerous (Firebird)
ALL FORMATS

10
Stunt Car Racer (MicroStyle)
ALL FORMATS



JET LAG

Hopping across 'The Pond' can create havoc with one's time sense, but we didn't quite realise how bad it can be until Marshal M Rosenthal's IMAGINATION WORKSHOP section in last month's issue came back from the printers. The astute among you may have noticed that they're 13 months behind us over there in New York!

Even now, Marshal's struggling to get across the International Date Line...

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Amiga contacts wanted to swap games demos etc. Write to Steve Davis, 28 Chipping Drive, Alexandra Hills, 4161, Queensland, Australia.

Amiga contacts wanted. For a quick reply write now to: Graham, 5 Viewside Close, Corfe Mullen, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 3ST or phone this number and ask for Adrian: (0202) 695083. Please no beginners!!!

Portuguese Amiga user wants to contact other Amiga users around the world. Write to: Antonio Jose Santos, R. Don Jose Carcaxo Lobo 41, Lavradio, 2830 Barreiro, Portugal or phone 012043378 (Portugal).

Amiga contacts wanted worldwide. Fast reply guaranteed. 100% reply. Send disk or list to Neil, 15 Coronation Road, Gilfach Goch, Mid. Glam., Wales CF39 8RE. Tel: (0443) 672755 after 6pm.

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C64 penpals wanted. 100% reply. Write to: G.E. Meyer, 41 Kendal Road, Eversdal Durbanville 7550, South Africa.

AMIGA FREAK needs contacts. 100% reply guaranteed! Write to: Atli, Hvannholma 26, 200 Kopavogur, Iceland. NO lamers PLEASE.

Amiga contacts wanted. Send lists or anything you want to Tito and Alex Leitch, 6 Old Denny Road, Larbert, Falkirk FK5 4SE. See you soon man.

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Amiga contacts wanted from anywhere in the world, or beyond, to swap demo's, hints etc. Write to Paul, 34 Sheepwalk, Paston, Peterborough PE4 6BH. Be seeing you.

Amiga contacts and coders wanted from all over the world. Write to Sky of Nova, 4 Suncrest Ave., Alstonville, 2477, N.S.W., Australia or phone 066283478. Hi to all my friends around the place.

Amiga/C64 contacts wanted. The solution to your confusion, write to: Lars Nielsen, Blomstervangen 83, 6800 Varde, Denmark. All letters/disks get guaranteed reply. Disks get priority. Everyone is welcome. Write now!

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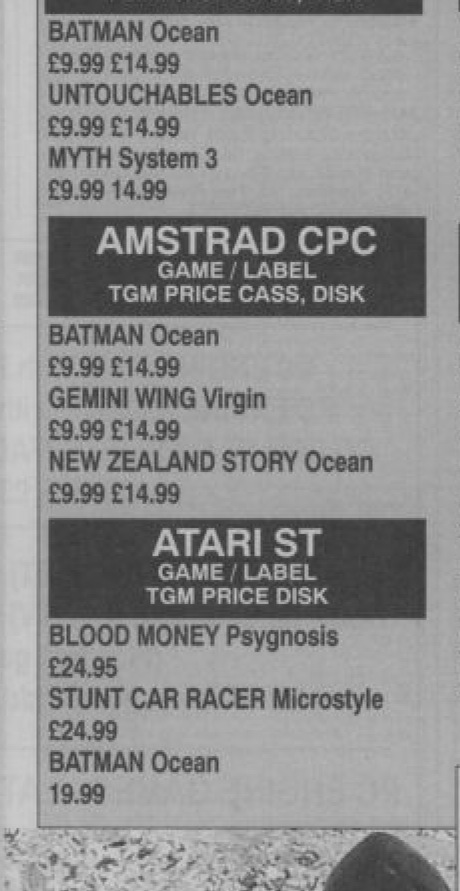
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An ~~Idiot's~~ Industry Guide to the Software ~~Industry~~ Idiots

BY RUTH PRACY

Part 3: The Directors

Every company has one. Most companies have several, each one of whom is the Ultimate Boss, has the Final Say in all policy decisions and Knows Exactly Where The Company's Going. As all directors are Men of Decision with Very Decided Opinions this is not necessarily a good thing, as anyone who has worked for a company with, say, more than two directors will tell you. Three Ultimate Bosses all delivering completely different Final Says and trying to pull the company in three entirely different directions has all the charm, appeal and job security of a day trip on the Titanic.

DIRECTOR TYPE #1: The Money Maker

Distinguishing Marks

Little boys, so the rhyme goes, are made of slugs and snails, and little girls of assorted icky things. Money Making Directors are made of solid titanium with attachable chainsaws and pure cyanic acid beating in their veins.

Behavioural Patterns

The MMD wants everyone to know how successful he is. And there is no doubt, in his mind at least, that success is measured in MONEY. Lots and lots and lots of MONEY. To this guy, nothing under six figures counts.

His first words were 'Gimme' and he never looked back. By five he had mastered the principles of creative book-keeping, taken over Daddy's chicken feed business, made him redundant and set about streamlining the operation.

One of the things that bugged him was that there was only a limited supply of chickens to eat the feed. Another was that his employees knew pretty much what to expect in the way of wages and working conditions, and had the unions to back them up, too. Still another was that his customers — the farmers — knew what they wanted from chicken feed (live, fat chickens). They weren't interested in innovation or dynamic markets, and actually expected a certain degree of quality in the product. Impasse. The MMD just couldn't make MONEY fast enough.

Then along came Clive Sinclair and gave him heaven on a plate. It was all there. Games software had a limitless supply of new customers, with YTS cheques clutched firmly in their sweaty hands. And computer manufacturers kept making new models, allowing games to be trundled out again and again on each format. What's more, the customer turnover was so high that most of them never even had time to notice that, say, Killer Robots from Centauri was really Phantom Ninjas with different graphics. So long as it went ZAP!!! WHEEEE!!! and BOOM!!! everyone was happy.

Somehow, it didn't quite work out like that. Possibly, this was because the MMD couldn't understand why developers should want computers instead of nice, sensible conveyor belts and bagging machines to work on. Possibly, too, it was because the adverts for Killer Robots from Centauri didn't go down too well in Farmer's Weekly. More probably, it was because the MMD's idea of fun was watching the Share Index rise and he could never come to grips with having a workforce who spent their days (and nights) watching a screen, copying other people's games, drinking vast (and expensive) quantities of black coffee and throwing disks at each other. What's more, the chicken feed always came in on time. He was right about the money, though.

DIRECTOR TYPE #2: The Megalomaniac

Distinguishing Marks

Where the MMD does it for dosh, the MD does it for POWER. Not for him the select residence in the country; this guy's into palaces in the middle of town (he was single-handedly responsible for the Docklands Development) and knows the value of driving a single, very expensive car that is instantly recognisable as HIS (nobody else would be seen dead in it).

A compelling-looking chap, he has very blue eyes and very dark hair that tends to flop over his forehead in moments of stress. He makes up for his lack of inches by wearing ultra-shiny raised-sole knee-high boots and standing on the tallest object available (preferably a platform, but the shoulders of a handy minion will do). He practises his charisma in front of the mirror for hours every day and cultivates a neat little moustache to add that distinguished air. We shall call him Gruber.

Habitat

Oberschutze Gruber does not have a home, he has a residence. But he is rarely seen there: he lives his real life in the pages of the games software press, who follow his every move with the tenacity of hyenas trailing hunting lions (except that the hyenas are interested in the lion's prey and wouldn't go near the lion itself for a month's supply of free wilder-beest).

Rottenfuhrer Gruber, on the other hand, makes sure the press stay as close to him as possible. In his book, press=publicity=marketplace exposure=POWER, a useful little equation that he learned at his mother's knee. So he adopts a lifestyle that would do credit to a Hollywood star (that's where the real power is anyway, these days — all the best world leaders train there) and makes sure that he attends all the right trade shows and is always pictured with a blonde on one arm and a bottle of champagne on the other. When he can't find a handy trade show, Scharfuhrer Gruber makes his own back at Party Headquarters. This is called 'celebrating our latest mega-success'

and accounts for his permanently glazed expression.

Behavioural Patterns

Gruber started out as an artist. Not a very good one, unfortunately, and his young life was permanently blighted by the total refusal of anybody at all to use his graphics in their games. It was this early dashing of his hopes that made the Obersturmfuhrer, a man of decision and great (some would say crackbrained) vision, determined to take on the games industry and Conquer All.

So, communication being his forte, Gruber set to and wrote the Definitive Book on How The Industry Should Be Run. It was an instant success, and made the Sturmbannfuhrer, whose real talent was management, enough money to employ people who'd write the games that would lead him to ULTIMATE POWER. Having an incredibly acute understanding of the human condition, Gruber only took on the young and impressionable, so that he could mould them to his will and make of them the finest development force the world had ever seen.

Next, he looked about him to find what material would best suit his master plan to rule the software world. What else but the stuff of which dreams were made, the golden web of wonder that already had 99.999% of the population in its sway, the Ultimate Source of POWER in the universe of Man. What else but Hollywood? Oberfuhrer Gruber flew to the States to negotiate as many licensing deals as possible and incidentally gained an awful lot more lovely publicity (later, the States would come to him, on their knees, begging him to turn their movies into games. But all that was in the future).

The first games were a runaway success and Gruber's following grew. It was not enough. He gathered about him a brilliant team of devoted followers who relayed his commands to the lower orders. Failure was not tolerated in his ideal industry. Gruber was himself perfect and required all his underlings to be perfect, too. His games would be the best (or, at least, the best-sellers) or someone would pay for it. Those who opposed him vanished without trace, and the trophy case of Gruber, with its gruesome display of ex-kneecaps and hollowed-out skulls, became legendary in computing circles.

It was at about this time the Fuhrer drew up his plans for the redevelopment of London (which was to suffer a nasty, very hot, accident beginning in Pudding Lane) with Docklands as the centrepiece. It also seemed good to him to have all his forces arrayed in the same gear, and, using his artistic abilities to the full, he designed clothes for them, hand-tailored in candy-striped silk with bow ties.

Having conquered Britain, Herr Gruber turned his attention to The World. He allied himself with the Empire of the Rising Sun, who already had a bruddy big srice of the market, and armed with arcade conversions and Nintendo cartridges he led his forces out and beyond, trampling all who got in his way.

SIEG HEIL!

DIRECTOR TYPE #3: The Caring

Distinguishing Marks

Just after he was thrown out on his ear from his last company (see Programmers, TGM021), the Laid Back Programmer had a vision; probably because right after his ear made contact with the kerb his head did, too. Resulting in a magnificent display of hallucinogenic fireworks, tweety things, pretty pink bunny rabbits and a prolonged stay in hospital from which he emerged a Changed Man.

Not that you could tell this from his appearance: he still totally failed to make contact with water (except once a year, accidentally, by falling in a river on his way back from the mushroom fields) and exudes a Very Interesting Aroma and enough grease to oil the Thames Barrier. No, the change was in his personality. The LBP had become Concerned.

In fact, the LBP became the champion of The Oppressed.

The major body of The Oppressed, he now saw, were all the little furry and tweety things who were variously worn, eaten and experimented on by Man. So he turfed out his leather jacket and emptied his fridge of everything that wasn't actually green or in flower. He also bought a season ticket to his local health food store.

Habitat

If he lived in New York, the CD would, as a matter of principle, be the only white man in Harlem. As he doesn't live in New York, he generally settles for Handsworth or Brixton (where he spends his time in a constant state of surprise that nobody seems to have noticed the blow he has struck from Freedom and Equality and really wouldn't even care if he had purple stripes and polka dots so long as he keeps his drains clean and doesn't play music after midnight).

Behavioural Patterns

In between concocting strange and mysterious things from lentils, alfalfa and soya milk, picketing and spending long hours arguing how creches for kittens, babies and cockroaches would be a good thing and a great benefit to the community, the CD tries to earn an honest crust (wholemeal, with poppy seeds) by running a development team.

He carefully selects his staff from the ranks of the Hopelessly Unemployed (everybody deserves a chance in life, after all) which means they're either totally illiterate and innumerate (turning every hex calculation into a nightmare voyage of confusion) or have just vacated a fascinating holiday resort on Dartmoor.

He is careful never to hurt their feelings:

'Masher, um, I hope this won't hurt your feelings but, um, I've just had Tony on the phone and, um, they're really not awfully happy about us overrunning by eight months... Um, yes, I know the scroll routine's a trifle, um, sticky but it might be a nice gesture if we could, um, maybe put a sprite or two on the screen. Ahh. Knuckles hasn't finished drawing them yet. Mmm. That's a pity. Err, I didn't really anticipate that Smiley faces were going to be that, err, difficult. Oh well... Perhaps you should use a table. No, actually not that, that's a desk. I meant a sort of table of values... Well, like this, really...'

The CD works very late at night. In fact, he writes most of his team's games himself, very tactfully of course, and usually after Knuckles and Masher et al have gone on holiday again so that they won't be offended and kick his head in. (He's a pacifist as well.)

Other Remarks

Like we said before, the CD is a Very Nice Person, actually. And well worth working for if you're at a loose end and not terribly bothered about turning up because you've got better things to do at the bank or the Post Office.

DIRECTOR TYPE #4: The Amazing Disappearing Man

Distinguishing Marks

None whatsoever, unless total absence can be called a distinguishing mark.

Habitat

Never-Never Land, the Y, or Someone Else's Flat.

Behavioural Patterns

This guy starts companies like other people make New Year's resolutions; a very good idea at the time and an average lifespan of about ten minutes.

He employs four or five developers (all under 17 and not exactly overburdened in the smarts department) who work from home and are all so Stunned and Flattered that somebody has recognised their talent at last and given them The Big Leg Up to FAME and FORTUNE that they forget to ask...

a) Are they going to get paid?
b) Who the hell's hiring them anyway?

The ADM, who by this time will have collected an Extremely Large Advance from a software house with a gullibility rating roughly equivalent to that of the American who brought the Tower of London from a Cockney pornbroker, will give them a rough outline of the game they're meant to be programming (on five formats — never mind that they've only got a ZX81, two Dragons and a BBC B between them). If they're really lucky, they'll get a design document drawn up by his kid sister (who is eminently qualified for the job, having once played Galaxy Wars down at her local arcade) as well. He then vanishes.

Eight months later (during which he has opened another 9.75 companies), he re-emerges, tells the kids any money due to them is forfeit because of the overrun penalty clause in the contract they never got, takes what they've done and steps back into a miasma of invisibility (poetic licence — actually, he does a runner). Nobody ever hears from him again, not least because he is also a Master of Disguise and knows the value of a fistful of passports and two or three hundred aliases.

Other Remarks

The ADM is without a doubt the wealthiest man in the games software industry. He's got a very nice retirement home group down in Buenos Aires, too.

THE CHARACTERS IN THIS ARTICLE ARE FICTITIOUS. ANY RELATION TO ANY PERSONS LIVING OR DEAD IS PURELY COINCIDENTAL.
MORE IN THIS OCCASIONAL SERIES SOON...

PBM UPDATE

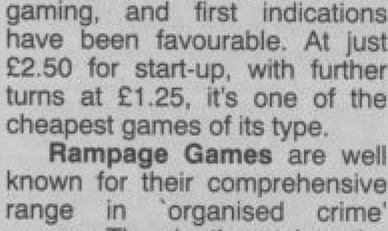


John Woods cheers us all up with his usual dose of magic and mayhem in the world of Play By Mail

Dogfight, from **Dark Mask Games**, is an interesting looking game. It's a computer-moderated game of aerial combat, where you're at the controls of a sophisticated futuristic fighter. With the help of two members of your team, your mission is to clear the skies of every other race! The planes are complicated machines with a large catalogue of weapons. The combat takes place in 2-D, so as to simplify planning and mapping. Overall the game is a fun exercise in trying to out guess your opponents, although loses a little on lack of diplomacy between players. Turns cost £1.25, and start-up is £3 which includes three turns! That's pretty good value.

Xanoth, from **Manifestation Games**, is fairly new on the PBM scene. You take the role of a single character in a fantasy land. The GM claims to promote roleplaying rather than power gaming, and first indications have been favourable. At just £2.50 for start-up, with further turns at £1.25, it's one of the cheapest games of its type.

Rampage Games are well known for their comprehensive range in `organised crime' games. The depth put into the games, and the atmosphere this creates, put their games way ahead of the opposition — although they have in the past been plagued by poor turnaround. Things seem to be running fairly smoothly at the moment, so I'll say a bit more about their games. St Valentine's Day Massacre I is the most expensive, but also the most enjoyable. As in all the games you play the role of a gangster in the middle of the US bootlegger boom. There is a large amount of hand-moderation which allows almost limitless options. You can try every racket you can think of — but watch your back. There are many other bosses out there just waiting for the opportunity to crack your joints or take over your turf. Be tough or you won't survive! Start-up in this version is £10 which includes two turns. Further turns are between £2.50 and £6 depending on position size.



The sequel, St Valentine's II, is a fully-computerised version where up to 50 player-controlled gangs scheme and battle for control of Chicago's 2025 city blocks. The game has less depth than the first but does offer the more reliable services of a computer. Start-up is £5 which includes two turns, with further turns ranging between £1.25 and £2. However, for TGM readers who get in fast, you can get your starter kit for just £2.50.

The third game is still being completed and will depict the five-family war of post WW2 New York. Called The Omerta it will complete the trilogy.

REVIEW

JUMBO CRISIS

by MAG

The game is played on a simplified map of the world, split into distinct countries. 20 players take part, each initially starting with one country. Each country has statistics for factories, nukes, anti-nukes, forts, divisional paratroops and population. The factories decide your income and produce tax revenues which can be used to build further units. Nukes are fairly self-explanatory, and can be used very effectively to wipe out large areas of population! Anti-nukes are vital for survival, as both playing countries and non-player countries soon get trigger happy and without that barrier you're as good as dead. Forts are very effective for inflicting heavy losses on the attacking forces — I once had an army of 5000 divisions wiped out by 2000 defending divisions, because they had 50 forts! Paratroops are similar to divisions except that they can be dropped behind enemy lines for surprise attacks. Population is vital for running your factories. As the radiation levels around the world rise, so the population can fall, so watch this carefully.

Each turn, you can move your armies, perform spying missions and allocate your spending with tax revenues. In play, Crisis is quite a simple game, yet it is surprisingly fast-moving and gripping. Players start a few countries apart so the first few turns will be spent conquering neutral countries. Expand fast, without fear, or you'll be left far behind. Diplomacy is the most important part of the game. Alliances are made and broken all over the place, and the timing of the backstab is essential!

Turns take about half-an-hour to do, although you can put much more time into writing to or phoning the various players in the game. One piece of advice is to be very wary about trusting anyone in the game... most Crisis players come away being hyper-sensitive about believing anyone!

So, summing up, Crisis is an excellent game, ideal for the beginner: fast-moving and fairly simple. I've played about six games and the fun is only now beginning to wear off a little. Start-up is free, with further turns at £1.25 a throw.

Machine rating: 75%

A READER WRITES...

Dear John

I have enjoyed the articles in TGM on PBM games. I am an officer in a local Boys' Brigade company in Belfast and as a group acivity for boys aged 11-16 I would like to start a small PBM football management game. I would be grateful for any guidance you could give me on how to moderate the game. I have an Amiga A500 and I would like to use this to run the game — are there any programs that I could obtain that may help me? Or, perhaps, some books that you might know of?

The problem with programs for PBM games is that due to the low volume, any that are around are very expensive. You'd be talking about a few hundred pounds for the software, and very few would be for the Amiga. Most PBM games programs are written on PC compatibles. Your best bet is probably to pick up some PBM-dedicated mags, and contact a few of the amateur football games advertised. They may help you out if you're nice!

A book that is a real asset if running a PBM company is Gamesmastership by Ken and Carol Mulholland. It can be obtained for £5.50 from: Time Patterns, 97 Devonshire Rd, Birmingham B20 2PG.

Illustrations by Martin Helsdon

CONTACTS

Jason Brunt, Dark Mask Games, 2 Purtingay Close, Eaton, Norwich, Norfolk NR4 6HU.

Manifestation Games, 41 Mary Agnes St, Coxlodge, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 3XB.

Rampage Games (TGM), 37 Beechwood, Woodlesford, Nr Leeds, West Yorkshire LS26 8PQ.

MAG, 15 Fairview Crescent, Harrow, Middlesex HA2 9UB.



Next issue we have some real surprises in store for you, so till then get writing to: John Woods, PBM Update, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB.


THALAMUS
The greatest journey is about to begin...
The Search for Sharla

The ADVENTURE STRATEGY ROLEPLAY Column

More overtime for Paul Rigby this month as he redefines the ratings system, introduces home-produced software and jumps back on the ARS column to cast his beady eye over the latest releases...

ST (also Amiga, PC) £24.95

CONFLICT EUROPE PSS

Conflict Europe (CE) is PSS's 16-bit version of the C64 hit Theatre Europe. The game is a strategic-level wargame where you play either the Warsaw Pact countries or a NATO commander controlling movements in Europe. The presentation is excellent. The game centres around your command area, the main screen holding the area of action. In addition you can click on several monitors to access various reports. While you play the game, life within the command centre goes on around you. People walk past the bottom of the play screen, shuffle on their seats and so on.

PSS would have us believe that CE is a 'simulation of the possible outbreak of World War Three'. This is just not the case. It is far too simplistic for that. In addition there are a number of annoying points which spoil it — even as a simplistic wargame. The main criticism is its lack of long term playability. CE becomes boring after a while due to repetitive play. The AI routines are suspect, too, as I thought some of the game tactics rather naive. Other negative factors are the unrealistic turnaround times of aircraft. They enter reserve mode far too slowly. Special missions are unrealistic. You have a limited choice but any choice you do make can only be employed once. I have reservation about PSS's views about the possibility of limited nuclear exchange. Finally, AWAC stands for Airborne Warning And Control not Command. A petty criticism, I know, but it just sums up the whole game.

S	
Presentation	86%
Atmosphere	50%
Engagement	41%
System	60%
Overall	53%

Spectrum (also CPC) £8.95

TREBLE CHAMPIONS Challenge

On the face of it, Treble Champions looks like a very good football strategy game. Included within the wealth of features are four divisions, non-league teams who are included in the FA Cup, League Cup, 1500-player database, training, coaching, midweek matches, player retirements, long- and short-term injuries and so on. My first gripe is relatively minor. The method of conveying the match action is not very exciting. Basically, you are told who has scored the goal and very little else. However, my main criticism is the speed of the program — it hasn't got any. I cannot remember ever having played such a slow game as this. When you load up the Spectrum version you have to wait around for a few minutes before it

WITH THE INTRODUCTION of home-produced adventures to the column, now is a good time to repeat the strategy behind the ratings. Basically, each category of software has a different set of ratings because they are designed to appeal to individual tastes. Their success is measured by different criteria. So, for example, to compare Ultima V with Red Lightning is ridiculous as they are as different as chalk and cheese. Yet, because other publications have the same rating system for everything, by implication, that is exactly what they are doing.

Similarly, homegrown adventures should not be compared to the 'glossy' examples. Home producers cannot compete with large programming teams using sophisticated equipment, programming techniques, pushy marketing people and large advertising budgets. So why review them as if they do have these advantages? They are a separate section of the software industry run from home by enthusiasts. Thus, home-produced adventure ratings should not be compared with any other category. I'm not trying to complicate matters — just seeking a bit of fair play.

Right, on with the show. Kicking off this month is news of a game which just missed review this month.

Impressions have announced a new Strategy/SF title called Emperor of the Mines for Amiga and ST (£24.99). The game revolves around you trying to scrape a profit in space mining. At the end of each 'episode' a new set of game variables are introduced to spice up matters. Should be available now.

initialises itself! Making menu choices and generally moving around the program is horribly slow. Eventually, you forget about all of the the game's good features as frustration sets in. Wake up Challenge — this is 1989 you know!

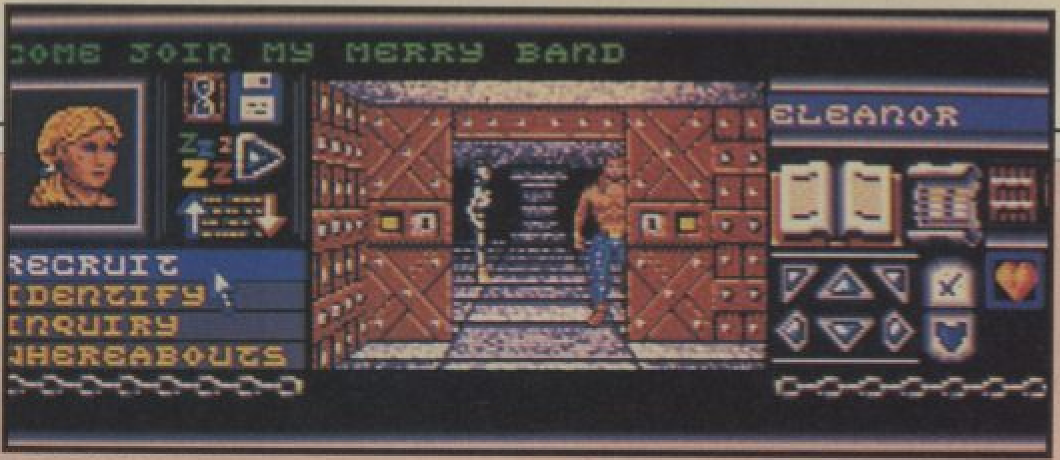
S	
Presentation	68%
Atmosphere	66%
Engagement	n/a
System	23%
Overall	47%

Amiga (also Archimedes, ST, PC) £24.95

OOZE

Dragonware

Ooze! What a wonderful name for an adventure game. You are Ham Burger, a man who has just received his inheritance — Carfax Abbey. Things have been going on in Carfax Abbey. Yes folks, it's haunted house time! Ooze, subtitled Creepy Nites, hits you with its beautiful graphics (pull-down Magnetic Scrolls-type) and crafted sound effects; it all helps to set the atmosphere. However, while dodging around the ghosts and demons, the game-system shows the lack of attention which has been paid to it. For example, on



ST £24.99 (also Amiga, Spectrum, C64)

BLOODWYCH

Mirrorsoft

In Bloodwych you must take a party of four to find the crystals of storing, hidden in four of the towers of Treihadwyl. Upon finding them they are to be taken to the fifth tower to destroy Zendick, a general baddie. There are several factors that save Bloodwych from becoming a fairly good Dungeon Master clone, because that's what it looks like, initially. The first, and most obvious, is the two-player mode. This is an innovative move by Mirrorsoft which works well. However, it is biased to the two-player game as the single player only has a very small game window to use.

I like the interaction, which is quite wide ranging. However, it is not as good as Ultima V, which has a more natural interaction keyword system taken from a character's conversation. Bloodwych relies on a set menu system. However, apart from Ultima V, it is about the best system around.

Combat is rather fictional. But then again I thought the same of Dungeon Master and Bard's Tale before it — its a fault of the fixed perspective. I wish there was a shifting, side-on perspective, as seen in the AD&D games by SSI. Presentation is good. Animation, however, is minimal and quite jerky in parts. Sound is kept fairly restrained, too. The magic system improves over Dungeon Master, I think it's much more friendly to use, but there are deeper, more advanced magic systems around.

R	
Presentation	85%
Attributes	84%
Engagement	77%
Atmosphere	81%
Interaction	88%
Overall	83%

Rumours abound of **Electronic Arts** producing a successor to Starflight called, altogether now, Starflight 2. The game scenario will be set 30 years after the original (you can load your original crew into the sequel). A new deadly race will be introduced, the story behind the Uhlik will be told and, finally, a dash of time-travel is introduced. As well as Hound of the Shadow (a HP Lovecraft-type RPG using the new Timeline system), EA have Keef The Thief, which is a RPG treasure hunt, and Swords of Twilight, a multi-player RPG written by the chaps who begat Archon.

A new name to me is **Britannica Software**, run by ex-MicroProse man, Ed Bever. He is working on an American Civil War game (another one!?) called Revolution '76. The difference being that Rev '76 introduces economic variables and political decisions.

Similarly, **3W Wargames** are a boardgame manufacturer who have dipped their toes into computer software. They look to have a promising start with Light Division, which was written by Eric Hyman, the fellow who wrote Kampgruppe and Gettysburg for SSI.

I've received news that the wonderful Star Saga: One is being converted by **Masterplay** to the Amiga and ST. Both versions will, according to Andrew Greenburg, be 'beautiful'. In addition, PC owners who have had their fill of Star Saga: One will be pleased to know that Star Saga: Two is on its way.

In association with **Broderbund, Kyodai** will be releasing the Land of Ys (PC). It's an action/adventure which revolves around a quest to find the six lost books of Y. Hydlide (PC) has its gameplay ranging from medieval villages, futuristic castles, parallel dimensions to outer space (which, alone, has 200 screens). Using a mixture of 3-D and overhead perspective, Hydlide presents you with a crack in the Earth. Monsters are appearing from it at a rate of knots and you've got to find out why. Finally, Psychic War (PC) is a strategy/puzzle-solving game. That's all I know, sorry.

Cosmi have a follow-up to The President is Missing, called Presumed Guilty. Set in 1996, you are an investigator for COPNET. While investigating a murder involving a chap who worked on the Star Wars project, someone frames you for his murder. Prove your innocence before your time runs out.

SSI are planning to release the Amiga and ST versions of Pool of Radiance and Hillsfar 'before Christmas'. In addition, SSI are to release Dungeon Master's Assistant Vol 2 — Characters and Treasures, initially for the C64. This table-top utility contains all the magic items from the DM Guide and Unearthed Arcana plus all the treasure types from the Monster Manual II. Dragons of Flame (all formats) is another AD&D action game (similar to Heroes of the Lance). Dragons of Flame allows you to control up to ten characters and follows the story up to the fortress of Pax Tharkas where you must rescue the slaves held within. War of the Lance (C64) is an AD&D wargame which pits the forces of Whitestone against the Highlord's dragon armies who must fight to gain possession of Ansalon. The game uses SSI's standard wargame overhead perspective. However, in addition, characters can be sent on missions to discover special items (Dragonlances, Dragonorbs, etc) which may help the cause. Finally, Sword of Aragon (PC) presents a mixture of RPG, economic and strategy play. You are the heir of the late Duke of Aladda who must unite the Aragonian Empire, even if that means stomping on a few enemies in the process. There is a zoom feature which enables you to see tactical combat. Amiga and C64 versions are planned.

See the SSI feature for exclusive screenshots of many of the above games.

D&H Games have a number of strategy sports games on offer from their budget **Cult** lable. The list is International Football (Spectrum), British Super League (Spectrum), Soccer 7 (Spectrum), Footballer (Spectrum), On The Bench (Amstrad) and First Past The Post (C64). All will retail at £2.99.

An interesting budget pack is on the way from Simon Wood. I think it's Spectrum based (you forgot to tell me Simon!) and, apparently, £1.99 will buy you three adventures and a tape-based fanzine. When I receive a copy I'll give you the lowdown as well as Simon's address.

Many thanks to all of you who have taken the trouble to send me letters. Please be patient if you are waiting for a reply in the column (space has defeated me again!). However, if you wish to have a personal reply please include an SAE and I'll get back to you as soon as possible. Bye for now. I'm off to feed the ARS Column's pigeons... now where's those bread crumbs?

Paul Rigby, TGM, PO Box 10, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 1DB



Amiga (also ST, PC) 29.99

LEGEND OF DJEL

Tomahawk

Legend of Djel (LOD) is another one of those strange French releases. Although I've classed it as an adventure there is a sprinkling of strategy mixed in. As is their want LOD has a terribly involved plot.

Basically, you play Djel. You have a multitude of powers — your father was a wizard and your mother a witch, so what do you expect? Anyway, the people of the land didn't trust your parents (it's a long story) so you are not too popular either. However, bad times have befallen the locals and they look to you to solve their problems — makes you sick how false some people are, doesn't it?

From your home you must travel to different lands. The upshot is to find Azeulisse's daughter — who? (look, it's a long story, okay?), then make a potion for Theros and, finally, create gold for Kal. Each world consists of one, very nicely drawn, graphic. You search the graphic for clues, objects and so on by clicking on parts of it. However, you only have a limited supply of clicks. You will find yourself bouncing between different 'worlds' in an attempt to solve puzzles (taking an object from one world to give to a character in another etc).

In addition, there are two strategy puzzles which you will play when challenged by another player. Either Confrontation by Force or Confrontation of the Mind. Both are good puzzle games in themselves. In fact you can access them when you have solved the adventure. LOD is graphically and sonically impressive, integrates the puzzle games well and, generally, makes a real effort to be different. Recommended.

A	
Presentation	90%
Interaction	80%
Atmosphere	83%
System	84%
Overall	85%

seeing a signpost I said, 'Examine post' which brought 'I can't see a banister here'. While 'Examine leaves' was replied with 'I can't see a flyer here' — the system is full of holes. In addition, if you try to unlock a door, with the key in your inventory, you cannot just say 'Unlock door' it has to be 'with key'. Fine for home-produced adventures but not for glossy software such as this. A bearable adventure, with some decent puzzles, but plainly unfinished.

A	
Presentation	88%
Interaction	80%
Atmosphere	86%
System	58%
Overall	76%

Amiga £35.00 (also PC)

TWILIGHT'S RANSOM

Paragon Software/MicroProse

Twilight's Ransom (TR) is a graphic/text adventure. You have 12 hours to find out who has kidnapped your girlfriend and why, discover where she is being held and try to save her.

You must search Liberty City for useful clues. Two of which come in the box as packaging: a piece of paper with meaningless words and numbers on it and a tourist leaflet. TR displays a good parser, some excellent puzzles and an intense atmosphere. The graphics, while not being up to the standards of Ooze and Magnetic Scrolls, are passable. I did wonder, though, why I had to search and map my home town to find out where I was. This is not very realistic, there should have been an Infocom-type map available in the packaging. Playing the game will take time as you must enter a variety of shops etc to obtain clues. Because they close at different times you will have to revert to a previous game save to catch the shop before it closes. Again, surely you should know this already? However, TR is still a playable and enjoyable adventure.

MicroProse have told me that they have no immediate plans to distribute the game in this country. However, it can be purchased from Computer Adventure World, Bank Buildings, 1A Charing Cross, Birkenhead L41 6EJ. Tel: (051) 6661132.

A	
Presentation	77%
Interaction	84%
Atmosphere	84%
System	78%
Overall	80%



PC £35.00

GUARDIANS OF INFINITY — TO SAVE KENNEDY

Paragon Software/MicroProse

Prolog is a language which is a favourite for artificial intelligence programs. Yet there has been, to my knowledge, no leisure software written using it — until now. Guardians of Infinity (GI) is certainly innovative in that respect. The package arrives on three 5.25-inch disks, with a 90-page novella and a 146-page, ring-bound, mission manual (and an excellent piece of research this is, too). GI is actually a text adventure but it has a whole disk devoted to a text/graphics mission briefing.

The game is handled entirely via conversations, with no puzzle solving or object gathering, although this can be done on a 'secondhand' basis — unusual, eh?

The story is that JF Kennedy should not have been assassinated in Dallas on November 22, 1963. His death was arranged by the Highfather and his cronies. The assassination has caused severe abnormalities in time causing its very fabric to unfurl. You play Dr Alan Cooper who must send five assistants back in time (from 2087 to 1963) to try to stop Kennedy taking that fateful trip. Your job is to manage your agents, telling them where to go and who to see. Since you cannot just walk up to JFK, you must go through 'channels', hence the interviews.

The game is ingenious, the only compari-

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DRAGONS OF FLAME

HEROES OF THE LANCE COME FORWARD... THE EVIL QUEEN OF DARKNESS GROWS IN STRENGTH.

Takhisis, Queen of Darkness, and her Draconian hordes have overrun much of the homeland of Krynn, even the elven armies of Qualinost, valiant in their resistance to this evil power, struggle on the edge of defeat. It is only the returning Companions of the Lance that can halt this wave of tyranny before Krynn is consumed by evil. Freed from captivity by an elven assault column, the Companions under the guiding direction of the Cleric Goldmoon and bolstered by their success at recovering the mystical Disks of Mishakal, can once again restore a belief in the gods and unify the inhabitants of Krynn against the power of Takhisis.

The Companions must move swiftly through this wartorn land, cautious of strangers but seeking compatriots and ever alert to the rapid advance of the Draconian forces. The courageous elves will finally fall, but there is one last chance to free the loyal slaves held in Pax Tharkas and join together to recover the long-lost sword Wrymslayer in what could be the vital rallying point in rekindling resistance to the plague of darkness sweeping over Krynn.

A DRAGONLANCE™ ACTION GAME

SSI™ STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS INC





TSR™



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Screen shots from various systems.

U.S. GOLD

U.S. Gold Ltd., Units 2/3, Holford Way, Holford, Birmingham B6 7AX. Tel: 021 625 3388.

son I can think of is Infocom's Suspended. There are one or two minor drawbacks. Firstly, there is only one save game (believe me, you could do with half a dozen) and the parser is not as smart as it could be. Apart from that I heartily recommend GI.

MicroProse have told me that they have no immediate plans to distribute the game in this country. However, it can be purchased from Computer Adventure World, Bank Buildings, 1A Charing Cross, Birkenhead L41 6EJ. Tel: (051) 6661132.

A
Presentation 84%
Interaction 82%
Atmosphere 88%
System 83%
Overall 85%

C64 £9.95

FIRE KING
SSG

Fire King was programmed by Micro Forte, the chaps who did Demonstalker. In fact, Fire King just looks like the next stage up from Demonstalker. A bit more RPG-type gaming is thrown in but, basically, it's still Gauntlet with knobs on. The game revolves around saving the land by entering the catacombs and killing the beast. However, there is more to it than that as the plot takes a few twists and turns. The plot is, really, the game's chief plus point. RPG features are fairly thin on the ground. Sound and graphics are good, though. Good for a laugh, as they say.

R
Presentation 70%
Attributes 51%
Engagement 58%
Atmosphere 70%
Interaction 55%
Overall 61%

PC (also Amiga, ST) £29.95

MANHUNTER — SAN FRANCISCO
Sierra Online

Manhunter 2, in other words. Briefly, you must work undercover as a Manhunter in San Francisco trying to find the killer you have been following from New York. In addition, find out why the Orbs are so busy in San Francisco.

Movement around the game is via the



MAD device which displays an onscreen map. Enabling the tracker will pick up a suspect. When the suspect enters a building the tracker zooms into a close-up sequence displaying what's happening. You are able to travel to any of the locations frequented by the suspect. Once there the screen will show a graphic of the location. Moving the cursor around the graphic will highlight any interesting objects or exits. The cursor will change shape depending on what it's found. An exit will turn it into an arrow, an invitation to look closer will turn it into a magnifying glass, etc. If the cursor picks up an interesting feature, clicking on it will bring up a close-up, searching that picture might reveal an object, click on it to pick it up and a close up of the object appears, and so on. Manhunter 2 does not have a recognised parser, there is no typing in.

There is a sprinkling of typical Sierra action sequences, including a rats/bats beat-'em-up and a maze game. I have reservations about these features and wonder if they are needed at all.

Manhunter 2 is graphically pleasing, I won't mention the PC sound. Fans of Sierra games will lap it up, while it is not one of Sierra's best examples, it is still one for the collection.

Manhunter 2 is due for release in January 1990. However, if you can't wait Computer Adventure World say that they will be taking some import stocks soon.

Contact: Computer Adventure World, Bank Buildings, 1A Charing Cross, Birkenhead L41 6EJ.

Tel: (051) 6661132.

A
Presentation 85%
Interaction 71%
Atmosphere 86%
System 80%
Overall 82%

Spectrum £3.95

THE GORDELLO INCIDENT
Tartan Software,
61 Bailie Road, Norrie Crescent, Montrose, Angus, Scotland DD10 9DT.

The Gordello Incident (TGI) follows on from Double Agent in that a similar system is used. TGI arrives in three parts, each with its own instructions, and a final postscript part. Tom Frost is one of the few home adventurers to produce a truly innovative system. The split-screen, multi-character control makes for some intriguing puzzles. TGI goes one better than Double Agent in that secondary characters play more of a part. I cannot recommend TGI highly enough, it's unique and cleverly designed.

Homegrown 93%

Spectrum £2.99

SHERLOCK HOLMES — THE CASE OF THE BEHEADED SMUGGLER
Mental Image,
36 Verney Road, Langley, Slough, Berks SL3 8NX. (Cheques payable — P.Walsh)

This is a two part adventure (with a separate instruction program) with a freebie called Yuppie on the flip side. The Holmes instructions a well designed except for the sloppy ending which ends with a BREAK code. The well-presented adventure is spoiled by a lack of testing. For example, 'Exam wardrobe' gives 'You can see a coat'. But try to get the coat and it denies all knowledge of its existence. Then the wardrobe is mysteriously closed again and will not respond to the, previously successful, open wardrobe. There are one or two other glitches and the odd spelling mistake. Yet, despite my criticism, it is still worth a look.

Homegrown 71%

Muskets and Magic

In a special EXCLUSIVE interview for TGM, Paul Rigby speaks to the wargaming/roleplaying giants SSI. From Computer Bismarck to the TGM Top Score, Curse of the Azure Bonds. TGM finds out what they've done and where they're going

Strategic Simulations Inc are a major force in both wargames and computer RPGs. Recently, their RPG products have taken a significant turn in their development with the addition of the TSR licence for their AD&D system. I talked to Joel Billings, SSI's President, and Chuck Kroegel, who, too, is deeply involved in SSI's products having been, amongst other things, the Product Manager for Pool of Radiance and Curse of the Azure Bonds. Before delving into the specialist areas of wargames and RPGs I asked Joel about SSI's roots. How and why was SSI formed?

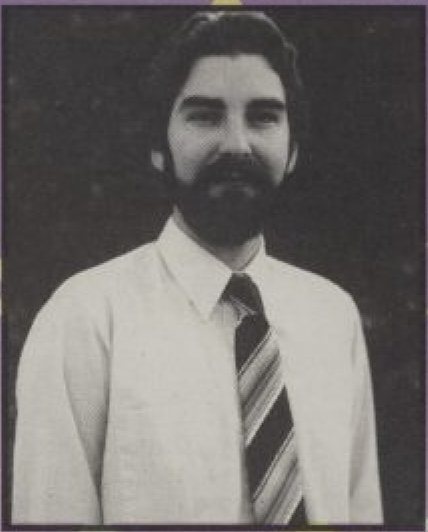
'Well, I started in the summer of 1979 initially to do computer wargames and other strategy games, but wargames were the primary focus. I've been a wargamer for a long time. I was out of college, working in the summer before graduate school and happened to run into a programmer who knew some [war] gamers who were programmers, and I thought that maybe I should talk to them. I did and then we decided to make a computer wargame. This was back when the Apple II and the TRS-80 were the only computers around. Computer Bismarck, our first product, was released in January 1980.'

But why a naval wargame?

'Well, I thought it would be easy to do on the computer and take advantage of what the computer would bring to a wargame. There were two things that I wanted the computer to do. One was to provide an opponent. Since artificial intelligence was in its infancy, we had to do a game where it would be relatively easy to make a computer opponent. In that case we could make the computer play the Bismarck and the Prinz Eugen very easily — just one or two ships which wouldn't be hard to program to play against you. The other big advantage of the computer was artificial intelligence and hidden movement. The hunt for the Bismarck was a perfect situation for both those reasons. There were many Bismarck boardgames out and one of the weaknesses was that everything was artificial as there was no way to play that scenario without a referee.'

In fact Trip Hawkins (Electronic Arts' President) had a hand in SSI's emergence and the decision to support the Apple computer.

'In summer 1979, right after I got the idea to start the company, I was introduced to some venture capital people by my uncle. One of them had asked Apple for someone to tell him about the market and spoke to Trip [who was working for Apple at the time]. Trip came over with his Apple computer, picked me up and we went over to this guy's house [the venture capitalist]. Trip said that I should develop games for it. At the time I only knew about the TRS-80 — I don't think I even knew what an Apple computer was. Trip convinced me that the Apple was the best one to go with. That was in August and I got my first Apple in October. The original Bismarck was being programmed on a North Star Horizon, I think it was. That was because I was working at AMDOL, a mainframe computer company. The head of the AMDOL home computer club had this North Star Horizon.



Joel Billings, President of SSI



'The venture capital people were interested in funding SSI but they wanted to have somebody with some business experience to run the company. They actually wanted Trip to run the company. I would then be the design person. But, at that time, Trip had stock options in Apple. So he explained that he couldn't leave Apple until 1982 but then he wanted to start his own company. In the meantime, he was happy to be on the SSI Board of Directors. He remained on the Board until 1982.'

"I thought it would be easy to do on the computer and take advantage of what the computer would bring to a wargame"

So how were SSI's games marketed in those dark days? Surely Trip Hawkins helped out with those first tentative steps into the software market?

'The Apple connection was very beneficial because we were able to get hold of the Apple mailing list, which in February 1980 was about 30,000 names. We sent a flyer to all 30,000 Apple owners, then we began advertising in the wargame magazines. Our first ad was for the £2,160 wargame. £2,100 for the computer and £60 for the wargame. From what we were told a lot of people bought Apple computers at that time just to play wargames. We thought we would be a mail-order company but within a month we were inundated with orders from dealers who had heard about the game. So, very quickly, we became a distributor to retail stores. It was hit and miss. But Trip was able to give me a list of Apple's distributors in retail which helped immensely.'

I have heard that SSI was the first company to put their products into a box. How true is that?

'Yeah. What happened was, I was living in my uncle's house in a second storey apartment during the first month that we released Computer Bismarck. Before we got our own offices we had a thousand boxes, which was our first print run. They were all in my bedroom wait-

PRESS ANY KEY

"If you had gone into a store at that time you would have found software for about £20, pretty much Pac-Man clones"

ing for the game to be finished, stacked to the hilt. If there had been an earthquake I would probably have never come out of it alive — with boxes falling on me!

'But, until then, everything was in ziplock bags. If you had gone into a store at that time you would have found software for about £20, pretty much Pac-Man clones and various arcade games. All packaged in ziplock bags. With us, it was not a conscious decision to be different. We knew we were competing with boardgame companies with nice packaging, boxes, etc. By the summer of 1980 many other companies were going towards boxes.'

Going to the opposite extreme, where does all this innovation lead SSI in the future?

'We only look two years into the future — it's about all we can handle! We will be concentrating on RPGs. That will include all kinds of roleplaying, not just fantasy. We'll be doing some science-fiction products in the future. For example, we have the Renegade Legion licence from FASA, the same company that did Battletech. Renegade Legion is a sort of a Star Wars-type, space combat, roleplaying system. We're going to be doing that next year. We are moving into the flight simulator arena but ours will involve flying on the back of a dragon. However, it will still be a true, polygon-driven, flight simulator. We'll continue to do wargames but more 16-bit wargames as opposed to the 8-bit.



A sneak look at the future: Moebius 2 — Windwalker on the Apple II

'Through our Japanese licensee, Pony Canyon, we are having our products converted to Nintendo games machines. At some time in the future we'll have more of our products on Nintendo and/or Sega. Of course, the 16-bit Sega has just started shipping here. We are anxious to see how that does. The Pony Canyon arrangement was made about two years ago to do the Japanese version of our games and the Nintendo version for both the US and Japan. Heroes of the Lance will come out in October on the PCs in Japan. However, when you have finished with your product, you submit it to Nintendo and it will be at least six months before you get your cartridges. So Heroes of the Lance will not be out on the Nintendo until next spring.'

I asked Joel about SSI's continuing support of the C64, with the regard to the growing 16-bit presence in the States; and the ST, with its poor sales performance in the American market.

'The C64 is still our number one best-selling format for our AD&D roleplaying products. It's outselling the PC two to one. As long as that continues we will be supporting the C64 — at least with RPG products — for quite a while. On the other hand, Red Lightning on the PC is doing very well and our 8-bit wargames are not. We've discovered that many SSI 8-bit wargamers have migrated to PCs. So we will, probably, not do as many wargames for the 8-bit because of that migration. Also, if we do a product for the PC we can convert it over to Amiga and ST fairly easily. The C64 is about the only popular 8-bit machine around, with the falling of the Apple market. So it's not cost effective to do many 8-bit wargames.

'The ST is almost insignificant in the States. It's really disappointing. Red Lightning, for example, on the ST in the States is being outsold two to one by England. That's really ridiculous from our point of view. But we will probably keep doing ST products as long as we do Amiga conversions and we can make a few dollars in Europe. I think the ST market will slow down in the US but we have enough of a market for the Amiga to be worth it.'

So, in affect, the Amiga is supporting the ST?

'Yes. As far as we're concerned if it wasn't for the Amiga there wouldn't be much ST software produced.'

Moving onto the wargames themselves I asked both Joel and Chuck about their views on the 'Fog of War' and whether they would ever consider taking the theory to the extent of Simulations Canada wargames (featured and reviewed in TGM 021/022) by having no graphics. Joel commented that he would rather have a game that he could control rather than a system that allowed you to only issue orders every now and again. He added that he does not find that approach 'very exciting'. The Fog of War does, by Joel's own admission, play a part in SSI products but only on a limited basis. Chuck emphasised that he would have 'a game rather than a simulation' which Chuck believes is the result when the Fog of War is taken too far.

Looking around at releases such as Panzer Strike, its sibling Typhoon of Steel, the American Civil War series and so on I asked whether a system was intentionally designed to be applicable to a variety of wargame topics. Chuck did not think so. His argument being based upon the degradation of the AI routines which arise when you plan a 'series' or 'generic' system. He added that one scenario allowed you to concentrate on its particular qualities thus refining the game system making it tailor-made for that game. Joel disagreed, however, he explained that a developer may spend a long time creating his system — be it WW2, Civil War, etc — which is time consuming and, therefore, expensive. New scenario games make up for that lost time. However, Joel noticed the fall in unit sales with yet another release based upon the same system. It was at this time when a new system was called for.

However, considering the similarities of Panzer Strike and Typhoon of Steel I thought it odd that you could not swap data between the two and create other scenarios, such as Russo-Japanese and so on. Joel explained: 'Well, there were rule changes and I think there might have been database changes. I know there were rule changes in the way the infantry worked from one to the other. They figured out that it was too hard to kill the infantry in Panzer Strike so they made some changes. We always refine the second and third games in a system. If you look at Antietam, Gettysburg and Rebel Charge you will find that there were considerable changes going on — between Antietam and Gettysburg mostly. We believe the games that come out later are generally better off. For example we consider Shiloh and Rebel Charge the best games although they don't sell as well as the earlier versions.'

Are all SSI games developed on the same system?

'No, it depends on the author. In the case of Red Lightning, he did his on the ST. In the case of Gary's [Grigsby] Eastern Front game it will be the PC; Dave Landrey's games, like Napoleon and Gettysburg, are always on the Apple II.'

Graphically, SSI wargames have remained more or less constant. I asked Chuck and Joel for their opinions of UMS and the recent Boridino/Waterloo systems. Surprisingly, Joel replied that he was offered the UMS system in its early form on an Apple II. However, he did not think there was much gameplay in it. He did ask for improvements to be made which were not acted upon. As a result he decided to drop it. Another surprise was Joel's declaration that he is trying to license the Boridino system from Atari. Always the perfectionist, however, he would like improve-



Right: a future glance at Omega from Origin Systems (PC)



Many features lacking in the first AD&D game were squeezed into Curse of the Azure Bonds — but at some cost to other parts

ments to be made. These include the addition of some animation during the unit movements, some speeding up of the gameplay and a quicker method of issuing orders. Joel commented that he knew about PSS's Waterloo but that he was going to stick with Atari's system as he knows that they will be producing further products in the future, based on the same system.

This brings up the point of development. Joel pointed out that SSI were finding it increasingly difficult to do in-house development because it was not proving cost effective. Single developers, such as Gary Grigsby, could not be expected to produce complicated graphical interfaces. Chuck's view on UMS was that it is 'pretty, but lacks gameplay'. He agreed that Boridino is 'a little slow' and the order system 'long-winded' but he also believes that everyone has their own style of programming. He did criticise the Report System, though, which he thought was not detailed enough.

Jumping to the recent Napoleonic construction set, which includes relevant scenarios, I realised that SSI had published a couple of Napoleonic wargames in their early days but wondered why, using their more mature game systems of late, a Napoleonic wargame has not been forthcoming till now. Chuck's answer was that because SSI's programmers are generally freelance they produced what they wanted to produce and, because WW2 was so popular, that was the main published product. Joel agreed that WW2 was the popular choice of SSI's buying public. To further explain why this particular construction set took so long Joel explains: '...with four scenarios on the disk we had to do four times as much playtesting to try to balance the scenarios. Also, trying to get the computer to play both sides in a construction set means that we have to have a much smarter artificial intelligence. In some of the other games such as Shiloh and Gettysburg we would make the AI play the way it needed to for that battle. But when you offer a construction set you have a very generic AI, which is much harder to do.'

Considering the depth of SSI's wargame gameplay I asked Joel what research was done with each product.

'Again, that depends on the author, it's his responsibility to do the research. We now have staff of 30 gamers. We're all boardgamers and we have collections of thousands of boardgames so we use those for research. There's a lot of data you can get from looking at miniature sets which have been published over the last 30 years. Technical manuals play a part for muzzle velocities, tank speeds, etc. There's also the basic resources such as libraries and so on. For example, Gary Grigsby uses several people, playtesters that he's met over the years. He uses a couple of people in Texas that do his order of battle work: one of them has the complete order of battle for the German army in WW2! I know they did much of the data work for Panzer Strike and Typhoon of Steel.'

Moving to the RPG area of SSI I asked Chuck Kroegel if he'd had much experience of the innovative Star Saga: One (reviewed in TGM022) and whether SSI ever considered the approach of the computer acting as a games master.

'I've played Star Saga. I thought it was very clever. Having to look up all the paragraphs in the booklets was a little awkward. The training system was very clever and how you could build things up. But multi-player computer games are a coming thing. I think the hardware is going to have to provide the facilities for people to get together. Whether that be through a modem or a hand-held computer I think it will be the future. If a group of people are together they sit around and play a boardgame, they don't sit down and play a computer game. The computer, up to this point, hasn't lent itself to that. If you can have players sitting around a table with a computer in front of them at the same time then you've got a playable system. However SSI is looking into multi-player systems.'

How about a Dungeon Master-

"He [Gary Grigsby] uses a couple of people in Texas that do his order of battle work: one of them has the complete order of battle for the German army in WW2!"





"It's very hard to have a quick combat which totally simulates what a full length combat would have been"

type game?

'I think Dungeon Master is very well done and looks nice. What they did was not much of a breakthrough, though. They did 3-D but played up on the 16-bit graphics. They sacrificed some gameplay and some depth of story and also the fact that you're only in a dungeon. The combat is abstract, there's no tactical flavour to the combat. So it has a few drawbacks there. We will probably be doing something similar to that perspective in the future.'

Speaking about the future I asked Chuck what SSI's plans were for the RPG, especially from a design perspective, and whether SSI would ever move away from the total hack 'n' slash idea of RPGs.

'We think that there is room in the market for hack 'n' slash. But we would like to get something a little more orchestrated along the lines of a novel or a movie where you really feel like you are playing the part and are then drawn into the story. It may not be totally realistic but entertainment doesn't have to be realistic to be good. Now that we've got the mechanics with our games, and the graphics are much better, we would like to focus on coming up with better stories and plots.'

How do you think puzzles should fit into an RPG, if at all?

'I don't like puzzles where you get halted because of something that you did earlier in the game, thus making it impossible to finish the game. In real life there is always a way to get something done, so that's the way it should be in the game. There should always be a way to get to your objective.'

I am all for increasing the significance of human emotions within RPGs. Introducing jealousy, admiration, racial hatred, selfishness, etc, can drastically increase gameplay as these modifiers can alter puzzles, character interaction and so on. Do SSI have any policies towards human frailties?

'We inserted some of that into Curse and Pool. We'd like to get more into it. Where some of the races don't think much of each other, halflings and dwarfs don't get along, mistrust between different groups. That's part of the richness of the story that I was referring to earlier. To get more of these personal relations to prevent flat characters.'

Ever since I played Pool of Radiance (POR) and then the sequel, Curse of the Azure Bonds (reviewed in TGM022), I have wanted to ask why POR lacked the very features which would have qualified it as a AD&D product. I have always said that I thought POR was basic D&D not AD&D as SSI claim. Curse of the Azure Bonds is the first TSR release to have the required AD&D features. So what happened?

'Well, we were not sure right away what we were going to be able to fit into memory. You can always do something better later on, and with Curse we did get more into it. But at first we were taking on a pretty big chore. We said, 'Well, let's try to get a chunk of this in there.' So we decided what levels we thought we could go up to. Some of the spells we just couldn't do very well as it would have taken a great deal of memory to do them, so we left them out. As time went on we figured other ways of doing it; to arrange memory more efficiently and squeeze more in.'

So have there been trade-offs with Curse? I noticed that the DIY character portrait feature, seen in Pool, is missing in Curse.

'Yes, that was one of the trade-offs when we went to Curse. You could only look at the character portraits when you were in the civilised section of the town. We had trouble fitting that feature on every side of the disk. So that was a disk space problem. We decided to eliminate that from Curse because we thought that it wasn't a good use of space. Thus, we were able to use the extra memory to put in more spells and character classes.'

Licence deals can be fraught affairs at the best of times. I asked Chuck if any problems occurred with TSR concerning interpretation of the characters, artwork, etc for the AD&D games.

'They were very concerned about many aspects but we spent many hours working with them and came up with compromises. Much of it is a matter of interpretation. It was all very amenable and successful, but we did have to spend a lot of time with them. All of our artwork was based on theirs. They didn't really complain about that because what they saw came out of their books.'

Criticisms, from myself and others, concerning the length of time needed to complete many of the combat routines in both Pool and Curse led me to ask Chuck for his standpoint and whether he would consider inserting an 'instant result' feature for the combat; something similar to Wizard's Crown, in fact?

'Yes, we'd consider that. The problem with having that [quick] combat is that you have two different forms of combat and, generally, people can take advantage of that to distort the gameplay. So you have to be careful. It's very hard to have a quick combat which totally simulates what a full length combat would have been. But, yes, we'd consider that.'

On that hopeful note Chuck was able to escape my incessant questioning. As the poor fellow had just left his sickbed, I was fortunate to talk to him at all. Thanks Chuck! My overall impression after talking to both Joel and Chuck was the rather heart-warming feeling that here is a company who are staffed by enthusiasts, who work for enthusiasts but, most of all, keep close contact and actually listen to public criticism — probably one of the rarest commodities known to the computer industry. On the AD&D question, I think they were wrong to publish Pool of Radiance as an AD&D product at all. To their credit, SSI were very honest about the difficulties they initially encountered which, considering the size of the table-top system, is understandable. With Curse of the Azure Bonds, SSI have made a real effort to cut through the gloss to improve the product and bring it up to standard. Finally, many thanks to Joel's father. Without his enthusiasm Joel may never have found wargames so intriguing and may never of founded SSI...



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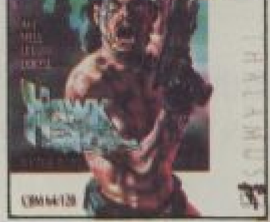
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The Games Machine

reviews

TOP SCORE

76 ■ BATMAN — THE MOVIE

'Ever dance with the Devil by the pale moonlight...?' And similar quotes, as sampled by Prince, spring to mind when reviewing this game-of-the-film, an Ocean licence almost as block-busting as the movie itself. Many game styles are involved in the home computer translation — Bionic Commando, Mastermind and Chase HQ — and authentic dark, moody graphics help give the Michael Keaton/Batman and Jack Nicholson/Joker atmosphere to an otherwise direct arcade game. Batdance to the music, enthuse to the gameplay, and go with a smile.

84 ■ UNTOUCHABLES

We may know him best as James Bond or Henry Jones, father of Indy, but it's as in the Untouchables movie that Sean Connery earned an Oscar as Best Supporting actor. Ness, Stone, Wallace and Mallone formed The Untouchables, FBI cops who stood proud above the bribery of gangsters — including the infamous Al Capone. Chicago during the 1920s prohibition is the setting for six levels of machine-gun toting action; bring along your cigar, bullet-proof jacket and spare ammo in order to fully appreciate Top-Scoring shoot-outs.

STAR UPDATES

79 ■ PAC-LAND

PC ENGINE Pac-Man's stroll around town finally reaches the Japanese console, in authentic colourful and highly-playable style.

89 ■ APB

C64 Oo! Ah! Ee!! Officer Bob's sampled cries are lacking from this 8-bit conversion but all the fun of the coin-op is neatly reproduced.

85 ■ TV SPORTS FOOTBALL

ATARI ST One of the first TGM Top Scores, now finally converted, keeping all the strategy intact but speeding up gameplay.

91 ■ F-16 COMBAT PILOT

AMIGA The ubiquitous F-16 faces one of its most challenging tasks in Digital Integrations realistic action flight sim.

92 ■ BLOOD MONEY

ATARI ST 'Where is the money?' The answer is simple: it's on the ST, with graphics and gameplay as good as the Star-Playing Amiga original.

STAR PLAYER

86 ■ CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

The electronic 3-D glasses may have been impossible to package with the conversions but Virgin and The Sales Curve have successfully reproduced what counts — fast, exciting Formula races from all around the world...

82 ■ VETTE!

An accurate simulation of what it's like to drive a Chevrolet Corvette — America's premier production sports car. Filled-in vectors display the the cars set in a race between the landmarks of San Francisco. Going for a Sunday drive has never been so good — probably because it's never taken place at 254mph before!

78 ■ FIGHTER BOMBER

For filled-in 3-D like you've never seen before, look no further than Vektor Grafix's long-awaited combat flight simulator. Polygons, the building blocks of filled vectors, are in plentiful supply here, forming the smooth and realistic planes and ground features that compose each unusual mission. In the unlikely event of terrorists, robots, MiGs and atom bombs becoming tiresome, you can even set your chosen plane against targets plotted by yourself using the custom mission option. Whatever the enemy, Fighter Bomber brings exciting top gun flight to your PC — let your Sidewinders do the talking.

92 ■ MYTH

System 3 follow up Tusker, the arcade adventure which earned a healthy 85% last issue, with a mythical (of course) jaunt through time and space, sword and sorcery style. Greek, Norse and Roman beasts have to be tackled as a mere trendy mortal in order to defeat the nefarious god Dameron; otherwise, the world will be overrun by demonic forces. Platform combat combined with arcade adventure, superb graphics seduce the player into an ultimately playable and highly involving game.

89 ■ STUNT CAR RACER

Both filled 3-D and racing are combined here, in a multi-track competition that would put both Evel Knievel and Hard Drivin' to shame. A first-person perspective viewpoint quickly and realistically depicts a dragster duel over extreme slopes and vast, chasmic jumps that will have your hair standing on end. Life insurance not included, but exhilerating, fun and often worrying gameplay are guaranteed.

GENERAL INDEX

PRESS ANY KEY

Dinner, dinner, dinner, dinner...

BATMAN — THE MOVIE

Ocean



Have you ever danced with the devil in the pale moonlight?, Batman — The Movie is here. Two other Batman games have appeared from the Ocean stable over the last few years, the 3-D isometric puzzle game by Jon Ritman and Bernie Drummond and Batman — The Caped Crusader. But this third game is without doubt the best: Gotham City hoodlums are terrorised by a huge, sinister bat-like creature that apparently 'flies' and is impervious to bullets.

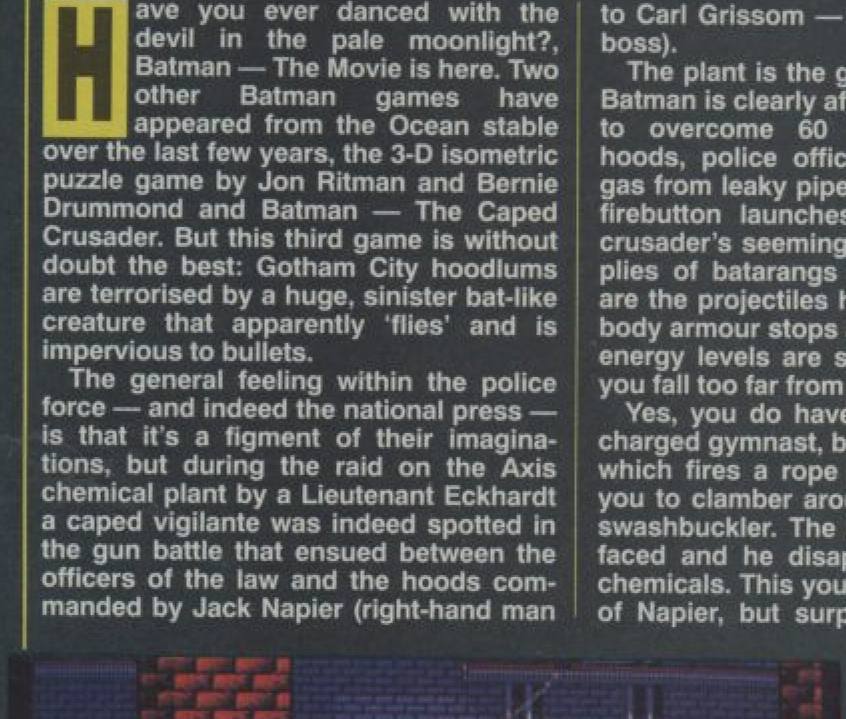
The general feeling within the police force — and indeed the national press — is that it's a figment of their imaginations, but during the raid on the Axis chemical plant by a Lieutenant Eckhardt a caped vigilante was indeed spotted in the gun battle that ensued between the officers of the law and the hoods commanded by Jack Napier (right-hand man to Carl Grissom — Gotham City's crime boss).

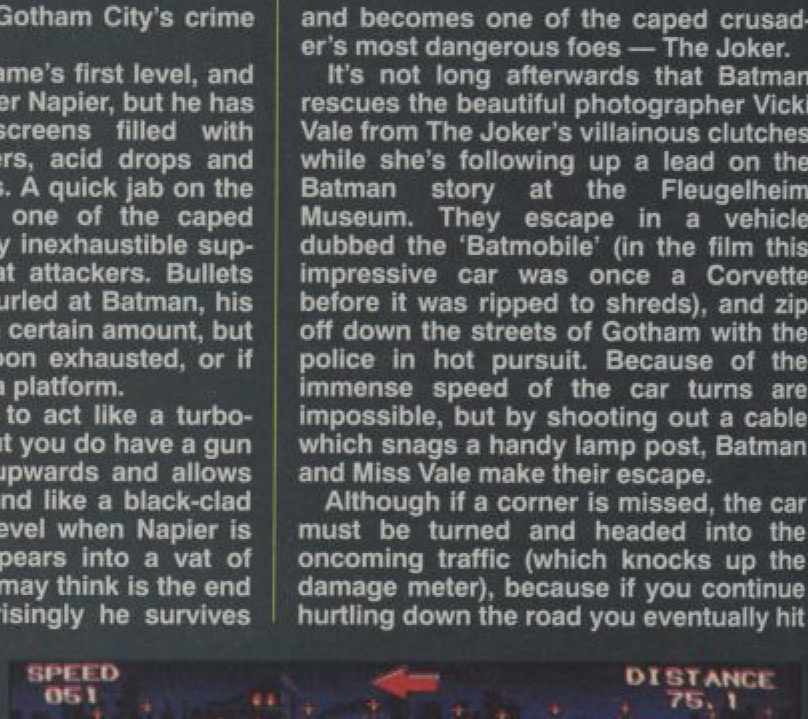
The plant is the game's first level, and Batman is clearly after Napier, but he has to overcome 60 screens filled with hoods, police officers, acid drops and gas from leaky pipes. A quick jab on the firebutton launches one of the caped crusader's seemingly inexhaustible supplies of batarangs at attackers. Bullets are the projectiles hurled at Batman, his body armour stops a certain amount, but energy levels are soon exhausted, or if you fall too far from a platform.

Yes, you do have to act like a turbo-charged gymnast, but you do have a gun which fires a rope upwards and allows you to clamber around like a black-clad swashbuckler. The level when Napier is faced and he disappears into a vat of chemicals. This you may think is the end of Napier, but surprisingly he survives and becomes one of the caped crusader's most dangerous foes — The Joker.

It's not long afterwards that Batman rescues the beautiful photographer Vicki Vale from The Joker's villainous clutches while she's following up a lead on the Batman story at the Fleugelheim Museum. They escape in a vehicle dubbed the 'Batmobile' (in the film this impressive car was once a Corvette before it was ripped to shreds), and zip off down the streets of Gotham with the police in hot pursuit. Because of the immense speed of the car turns are impossible, but by shooting out a cable which snags a handy lamp post, Batman and Miss Vale make their escape.

Although if a corner is missed, the car must be turned and headed into the oncoming traffic (which knocks up the damage meter), because if you continue hurtling down the road you eventually hit







a roadblock. Meanwhile, with the Batmobile safely parked in the Batcave, Batman attempts to solve the riddle of the apparently random poisoning campaign waged by The Joker. According to Miss Vale's investigation three products have been contaminated, each one harmless on its own, but when the three are used together the victim kicks the bucket.

In a Mastermind-style game Batman



has one minute to analyse the contents of a selection of products and determine which three are the dangerous samples. With his poisoning plan thwarted, The Joker resorts to organising a carnival in which he distributes dollar bills to an unsuspecting crowd as overhead hover balloons filled with Smilex poison. Batman's Batwing aircraft saves the evening as he uses its wingtips to cut the balloons' mooring ropes. Peeved, to say the least, The Joker uses a BIG gun to knock the Batwing out of the sky.

Which leads to the final scene where The Joker takes refuge on the roof of the city cathedral. This massive 100-screen section is similar to the chemical plant section in as much as Batman uses the Batrope to climb to the top of the Cathedral, fighting off coppers and The Joker's men as he goes. Only when Batman reaches the roof can the Joker be disposed off and everyone live happily ever after.

The game is every bit as good as the film, better in fact, because some of the cinematic scenes dragged on a touch, while the game is action all the way. Bruce Wayne in his Batman costume is as sinister as ever, and on the other side of the coin The Joker is his usual evil self. I should nip out and buy this latest installment of life in Gotham City now.

OTHER FORMATS
The Atari ST version should be available any day.

SPECTRUM 95%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
The monochromatic Batman sprite strides around with great zeal. The Joker's goons take life very seriously, and Batman's energy shoots down at an alarming rate (a nice touch on all versions is the energy bar: it starts off as Batman's face, but as energy drains it metamorphoses into The Joker's grinning face).



C64 95%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Batman comes across as appropriately darkly sinister. Both horizontally scrolling vehicle sections are superbly drawn and animated, and the sound in general is great. A must buy.

AMIGA 96%

£24.99
The music is stunning. Its frantic pace in the poison identification scene, along with the pounding track accompanying the Batmobile escape are have to be heard to be believed. The graphics aren't slacking either, with the dark sinister mood of the film captured perfectly. A must for all Batfans.

CPC 93%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Little more can be added to previous comments, except to add that the Amstrad version suffers minutely in comparison — certainly nothing to complain about.



A Top Secret reconnaissance mission to Leeds...

FIGHTER BOMBER

Activision

In the ever-growing field of fast, realistic 3-D, Vektor Grafix are the modest forerunners, a compact team professional enough to work only on projects they enjoy and believe in. One such labour of love is Fighter Bomber, demos of which stunned everyone a few months ago and now complete after more than 14 months of design and programming. It immediately differs from most (if not all) combat flight simulators in that it's not set in Russia or an Eastern country — instead it's the American states of Wyoming, Montana and Dakota.

The first step toward the skies is to choose an identity, either a pilot from the duty roster or a new one created simply by entering a name; whichever, pilots' service records are stored safely on disk. The most immediate task is aircraft selection, from a choice of seven, including A37 Viggen, F-4 Phantom, Tornado IDS and MiG 27. A full illustration of each is given, with optional text information and a spinning 3-D depiction of the craft, giving a taster of the graphics to come.

Although there is a free-flight option, allowing newcomers to get accustomed to controls, scenery and viewpoints, the real meat of the game is obviously in the missions. There are 16 of these, divided into four groups of four missions, dependant on the style. Each has detailed debriefing text and a map of the area, which can be zoomed down on to view targets or any part of the landscape, allowing the pilot to become familiar with the mission's location.

In total, 15 types of missile/bomb are at hand to arm the plane in preparation for the task ahead, positioned on the underbelly using diagrams and pointer, but the number and type that may be fitted depend upon the aircraft. If ground targets don't seem enough to test firepower, there are seven types of enemy aircraft to add dogfights to the action — an SU 27 Flanker and MiG 29 are among the best enemies; a F-14 Tomcat and F5E Tiger II to provide dissimilar combat characteristics.

Ready to take to the skies and launch a few Sidewinders, the game's freedom becomes apparent, even before take-off: it's possible to stay on the ground and taxi around the runway, even to the point of being able to enter the hangars beside it! And in the air, there are 11 different viewpoints, the angle and manification adjustable with a few easy key controls.

The cockpit is, in comparison with the average simulation, quite simple and uncluttered, but is perfect for combat. Target range readout and rotating cameo, and radar as part of a clear, readily-usable HUD help combat enormously.

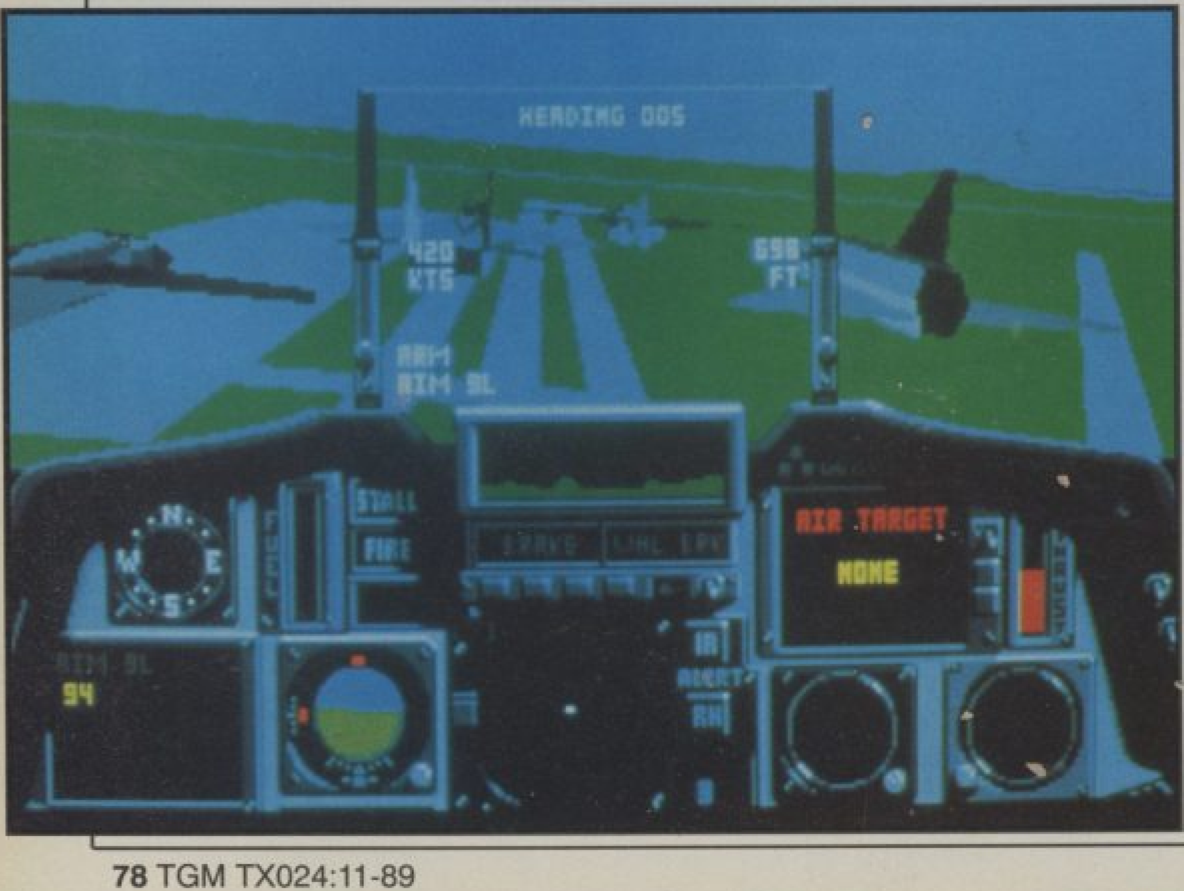
Successful or failed (in any one of numerous ways) mission debriefing returns the pilot to the map and the flight path that should have been taken and the one ACTUALLY taken marked upon it (they often differ tremendously).

If you find that the set missions are just too damn difficult, not difficult enough (unlikely!), or you wish to test a friend, it's possible to create and save out a custom mission. Targets and re-fueling points are quickly and easily positioned on the map, and briefing text can be written to accompany it.

Vektor Grafix have come a long way since the Star Wars coin-op conversions — Fighter Bomber is vast advancement in both depth and graphics. Its choice of aircraft, missions, controls and plentiful out-of-plane viewpoints do give it an exciting arcade flavour, however, so it will appeal to many more people than just flight sim enthusiasts.

Missions aren't just a case of finding the enemy and destroying them, they're often a complex combination of target sequences, time and fuel limits and flight path strategies. They involve such things as dummy nuclear warheads, time and fuel limits, Robbie the robot (Vektor Grafix' pet character!), terrorists and the unusual Rapid city, all in addition to the more conventional tanks, SAM sites, runways and MiG dogfights. With so many factors, it can be very easy to fail a mission, but you wouldn't want it to be too easy, would you? And although there aren't a vast number of variables, custom missions mean there are many other flights to tackle.

Die-hard simulation freaks will complain that the actual flying and handling of the aircraft is somewhat simplistic and the missions lack realistic war conditions. This will be preferable to the many people who like



£24.99

PC 91%

The VGA palette is used well on title and introductory screens, and then on the aircraft selection screens and plane cockpit, helping form highly polished presentation. The 3-D is what it's all about though, and Bomber really dazzles here. Each aircraft is composed from more than 70 polgons — the F1-11 with an amazing 120 — so although they can move in full perspective they're still highly detailed. Scenery highlights also use many polygons so that buildings, field guns and dinosaurs (in Rapid City!) are much more than simple blocks. Speed is, of course, dependant on the PC you're using, but whatever you use the graphic update means that, even if slow, movement will be smooth. External views have the greatest potential for breathtaking sequences, the best being the fantastic in-flight refueling which is reminiscent of the awesome realism of Redifusion multi-million professional simulators. Naturally, sound is weak — that's the PC for you — but with graphics this good it's not a problem; even on a relatively slow PC, Fighter Bomber is a fantastic product.

OTHER FORMATS

EGA and CGA PC versions should be ready as you read this, with Amiga and ST close behind. 8-bit conversions are progressing nicely and will be available shortly.

The Games machine STAR PLAYER



Polygons may be boring in maths lessons but they're certainly not here

their games direct and with fun, varied elements, as is the case with Bomber's intriguing, almost abstract missions. The seven aircrafts' different payloads and fuel consumptions DO affect combat and range performance, and so add something to the game and alter mission difficulty and tactics.

Although experienced computer pilots may have their complaints, all others can have nothing but praise for this game, and EVERYONE will be impressed with the ground-breaking graphics techniques, which surely mark a new era in filled-in 3-D, as Starglider 2 did. Amazing graphics and fun gameplay mean this has more appeal than any other previous aircraft simulation — you owe it to yourself to give it a test flight. **WL**

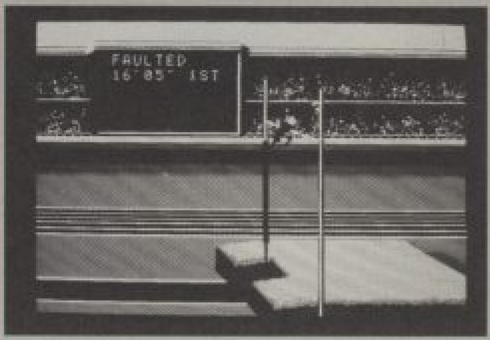
The Games Summer Edition

AMIGA ■ ATARI ST
EPYX £24.99
Commodore 64 66%, PC 76% — TGM013; Spectrum 73%, Amstrad CPC 71% — TGM021

Graphics on both versions are colourful and nicely detailed — especially on the hammer throw when a badly timed projectile hurtles towards the screen and seemingly smashes it, and on the Amiga game with the newspaper headlines reporting your successes. If you have arm muscles the size of Sly Stallone and the stamina of a marathon runner, take a look at this classic sporting sim.

Machine update: Atari ST 85%
Amiga 86%

The Games machine STAR UPDATE

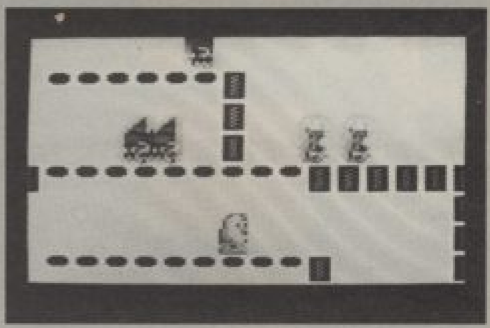


VERSION UPDATES

AMSTRAD CPC
Gemini Wing
VIRGIN/MASTERTRONIC
£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Ugly graphics. Sprites are colourful but blocky and indistinct,and though their greater area helps them, backgrounds are almost as crude. Scrolling and sprite movement is jerky which distracts the eye from the actual gameplay and makes Gemini Wing a big test of vision. Theme music is nice and jolly but effects are simpleCPC chugging noises. Amstrad Gemini Wing is vaguely playable but not really worth attention.
Machine update 37%

AMSTRAD CPC
The New Zealand Story
OCEAN £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Amiga 90% — TGM022, Atari ST 89%, C64 82%, Spectrum 85% — TGM023

With so many versions already out there, Tiki the Kiwi and Co need no introduction. The graphics are the usual garishly colourful Amstrad fare, and sound is a surprisingly good rendition of the 16-bit tune, and it plays throughout the game. Scrolling though is a tad on the dodgy side with the screen taking a fair time to catch up with Tiki as he leaps and bounds across the platforms. Still this is a playable version of a great arcade conversion.
Machine update 83%



AMIGA
3-D Pool
FIREBIRD £19.99
Spectrum 71%, C64/128 70%, Amstrad 68% —TGM020

'Maltese' Joe and friends try it out in the first 16-bit version. Graphically the Amiga game excells, with a smoothly scrolling table which allows you to view a shot from all pcssible angles. The computer opponents are tough, and much practice is needed, which is what gives the game its lasting appeal.
Machine update 78%



Pac-Land

NAMCOT ■ £24.95 PC ENGINE
C64 85% — TGM006 Atari ST 53%, Amiga 51%, Amstrad CPC 65% — TGM019

The only Pac adventure of series where you see the little yellow man's legs, the simple aim is to explore the Land in order to rescue the fairies spread throughout it. In keeping with Pac-Man's history, he's dogged by ghosts as he runs and jumps through the varied horizontally scrolling levels. He's aided in his exploits by power pills, as you'll have guessed, and also magic boots, awarded by the Queen Fairy, which allow him to hop through the air.

Though certainly not arcade-perfect, this is the most accurate conversion of Pac-Land we've seen so far. The cartoon-like outlined sprites are a touch on the grainy side but animation is arcade authentic — simple in places but generally lively. Music and effects can be described in the same way. Scrolling and movement are fast and smooth, and though the joypad controls need some adjusting to, all the playability of the arcade original is intact. A simple but highly enjoyable game that at times can be truly addictive.

Machine update 82%

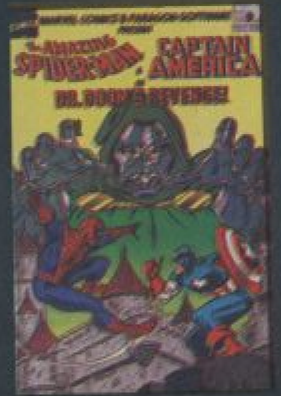


The Games machine STAR UPDATE

PRESS ANY KEY


MARVEL COMICS
MARVEL COMICS® & PARAGON SOFTWARE®
PRESENT
PARAGON SOFTWARE
the AMAZING SPIDER-MAN®
and
CAPTAIN AMERICA®
IN
MY SPIDER-SENSE IS TINGLING AGAIN!
HULK, YOU'VE COME TO HELP STOP THE MISSILE!


PREPARE TO DIE!!


The Amazing SPIDER-MAN
CAPTAIN AMERICA
DR. DOOM'S REVENGE!

Martial arts mayhem

SHINOBI

Virgin

The adventures of Joe Mushashi — hero of this game — earnt 82% and TGM's second ever Star Player in issue 14. That was for the 8-bit Sega console; for computer owners awaiting Virgin's conversion, here's a rundown of the gameplay.

Joe has to find and eliminate all leaders of terrorist group the Ring of Five and rescue the hostages, children of world leaders. Five multi-part stages have to be run through and Ring of Five henchmen fought off with throwing stars and kicks. The impish hostages are found throughout the levels and kicking them high into the air gains extra points or weapons/powers. The bonus stage is a first person view of stalking ninja; hitting them all with a star bestows ninja magic to Joe.

The Sega version was polished and quite addictive, hence its Star Player accolade. The computer versions, though not graphically dreadful, have dubious scrolling, control response and character movement, seriously dampening playability. Computer Shinobi is an average scrolling beat-'em-up with limited interest which could have been so much more if the programmers had focused on gameplay.

WL

AMIGA 50%

£19.99

Adequate music backs a rushed title screen. Plain, boring backdrops scroll jerkily while scruffy sprites are basically animated. Dull colours are used all round and Joe strolls jerkily along, his steps not matching the scroll speed so he appears to be sliding around on roller skates.

OTHER FORMATS

ST (£19.99), C64 (£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk) and PC (£24.99) released mid- to late September.



CPC 60%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Backgrounds are gaudy and are almost as blocky as the ugly, deformed sprites; when crouched and moving, Joe looks like he's doing Chuck Berry's duck walk. Scrolling is jerky, animation simplistic and music drones on irritatingly. On the plus side, there's some clear speech announcing the start of each level, and, best of all, gameplay is more enjoyable.

SPECTRUM 54%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

A fairly crude title screen leads to a fairly crude game. The programmers seem to have briefly considered the Spectrum's capabilities then thought 'Oh what the hell', and thrown colours around the screen. Different sections of background stick to black and a second colour, but people are constantly changing colours as they move around. Detail is fine although some parts of enemies are distorted, and everyone is animated with silly, rapid, mincing steps. Scrolling is fast but jerky and, with the colourful background 'highlights', distracts from the middle-of-the-road gameplay.

It shouldn't happen to a

VETTE!

Spectrum HoloByte

The Corvette, America's premier production sports car: the prototype completed early 1953 by a team led by Harley Earl, its body was made from Glass Reinforced Plastic (later to be known as fibreglass) in order to meet the exhibitor deadline for the year's New York Motorama show. The 'temporary' material was never replaced, and the manufacturers of the production models, Chevrolet, still use fibreglass today.

Various changes have been made to the Corvette since 1953, generally in the design, capacity and, therefore, power of the engine — the first, in 1957, to bring fuel injection to light. In 1984, an electronic dashboard and a new slim, aerodynamic design marked another milestone for Chevrolet — and a new beginning for 'Vette drivers.

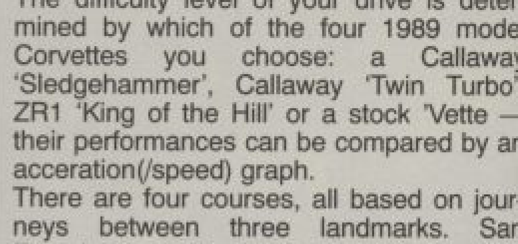
We humble British (and, particularly, humble TGM writers) will, in the main, never get the opportunity to drive such a stylish, powerful vehicle, let alone take around the sunny West Califonian port of San Francisco. As you'll have guessed, Vette! allows you to experience this from the comfort of your own home and on your 16-bit computer.

The difficulty level of your drive is determined by which of the four 1989 model Corvettes you choose: a Callaway 'Sledgehammer', Callaway 'Twin Turbo', ZR1 'King of the Hill' or a stock 'Vette — their performances can be compared by an acceration(/speed) graph.

There are four courses, all based on journeys between three landmarks. San Francisco zoo, Bay bridge and the famous Golden Gate bridge are fixed start/end points but any of San Francisco's roads may be used to get between them; a map display built into the dashboard helps you do this. Other than on a practice trip, the shortest route is clearly the best, particularly as there's a computer player racing you in a Lamborghini Countach, Porsche 928S-4, Ferrari Testarossa or Ferrari F40.

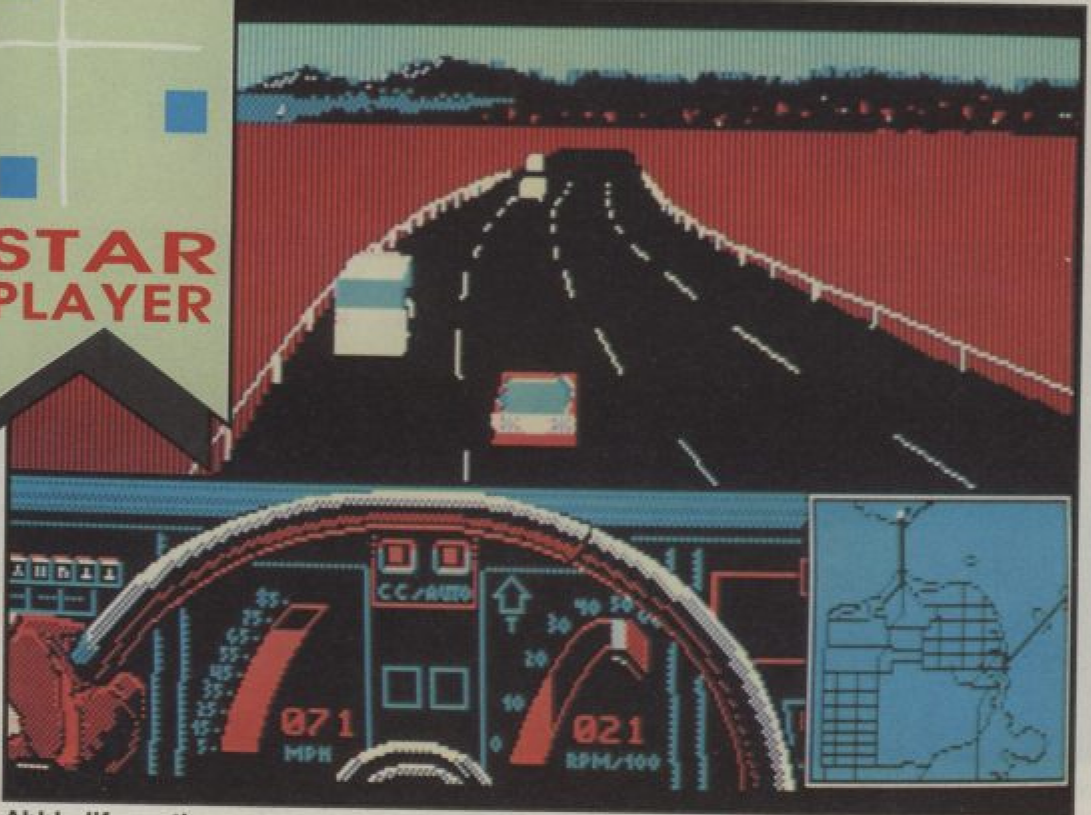
Looking out from behind the wheel, the computer player certainly isn't the only other vehicle on the road. In addition to other private cars, fire engines, trucks, motorbikes, taxis, buses, tankers, ambulances and police cars all jockey for space, and their appearances, both in motion and parked at the roadside, change according to the district and time of day.

For a different slant on things, the motoring



The Games machine

STAR PLAYER



Ahhh, life on the open road... You'll need all your driving skill in Spectrum HoloBytes' Vette. And, remember, everyone drives on the right in America!

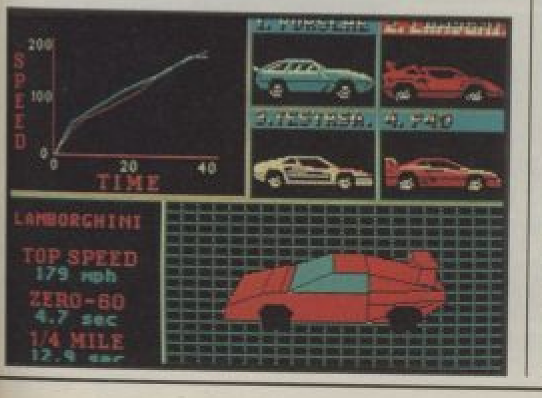
madness can be viewed from a helicopter (a simulation of such a viewpoint, that is!) — above and behind the car — or from a variable camera angle. This allows more of San Francisco's scenery to be admired and interesting new portrayals of the action.

If you're the source of too much action, like speeding, knocking down a pedestrian or hitting another car, the cops'll be after you, with intent to confiscate your licence. It isn't necessarily the end of the world, however, because, by highlighting a phrase from a list of eight, give what you hope is a good enough excuse...

And if you've got a 16-bit computer and have an interest in fast cars or simulators (or both), you've no excuse not to snap up a copy of Vette! This certainly isn't any simple arcade racer although there is a detailed 3-D landscape, albeit not as rapidly moving as that in recent coin-ops. Gameplay has considerably greater depth and documentation is extensive, with detailed performance statistics for the eight main vehicles in the game (the 'Vettes and computer cars) and a potted history of both the Corvette and San Francisco.

On the face of it, driving a car around a city, even accurately simulated, doesn't seem to be a dazzling game concept. Modifying it into a sports car race adds some necessary excitement and competition, and with some realistic traffic movements to fill the streets, it all somehow works. And works very well.

As a simulation, Vette!'s 'Vettes perform more realistically than any direct action



game's vehicle, so that getting across San Francisco is task enough; beating the computer car to the finish line is a challenge hard to beat but harder to resist. Better stil is the two-player duel — PCs may be linked by modem or serial cable so friends, with independent views of the city, can race one another.

Car simulators are rare and Vette! is easily the best, and very high on the list of racing games as a whole. Thusfar, it's a unique product — no other game lets you burn rubber in such a realisitic manner. Road hog or Sunday driver, a Corvette is something you should and now CAN drive.

WL

PC **91%**

price TBA, probably £34.95

As ever, the quality of animation and playability depends on the processing speed of the PC used, but even on a bog-standard machine the 3-D perspective works quite well. The graphical jumps between frames aren't too drastic and are barely noticed in midgame on a fast machine. While landscape is generally made up from solid blocks of colour, the horizon has a fair amount of detail and there are highlights dotted around the scene. Vehicles are rather angular but, bearing the 3-D in mind, are impressively detailed — despite square wheels! The dashboard and introduction screens are cleanly and pleasantly drawn, and although harsh, sound effects are better than most on the PC. For owners of fast PCs Vette! is an essential purchase; users of humbler compatibles should consider carefully.

OTHER FORMATS
ST and Amiga December/January, prices to be announced.

VERSION UPDATES

Commodore 64
Fire Power
Microillusions £9.95 cass, £14.95 disk
Amiga 71% TGM007

S'not fair I was a tank, did you play soldiers when you were a kid. Well with the C64 version of Fire Power mechanised warfare is at your fingertips. Generally the sprites are colourful but the blobby Commodore graphics lose out in definition. Fire Power is best played with a friend, but unfortunately we didn't find the game absorbing enough to keep us playing for more than a little while. In short Fire Power is moderately playable, but we feel that you won't be coming back to it too often.

Machine update 56%

Amiga
RVF Honda
MicroProse £24.99
Atari ST 82% TGM020

There's not really a lot to say about RVF on the Amiga, both visually and sonically it's virtually identical to the ST game. The same vroomy engine noise drives you batty, while the very fast bike hurtles around the track at breakneck speeds threatening to throw off any rider whose skills don't equal the likes of Barry Sheene. So take our advice get plenty of practice in before tackling the racing season, not quite as good as some other biking games (Super Hang-On springs instantly to mind) but take a look.

Machine update 79%



AMIGA
Astaroth
HEWSON £24.99
Atari ST 84% — TGM021

Just as tough as on its sister machine, Astaroth on the Amiga is here. Poor old Ozzie is still searching for the Angel Of Death, and is still being killed with every step because he lacks offensive weapons until he collects the mind powers. But despite this slight annoyance, Astaroth is a tough and challenging collect/shoot-'em-up that should be considered.

Machine Update 83%

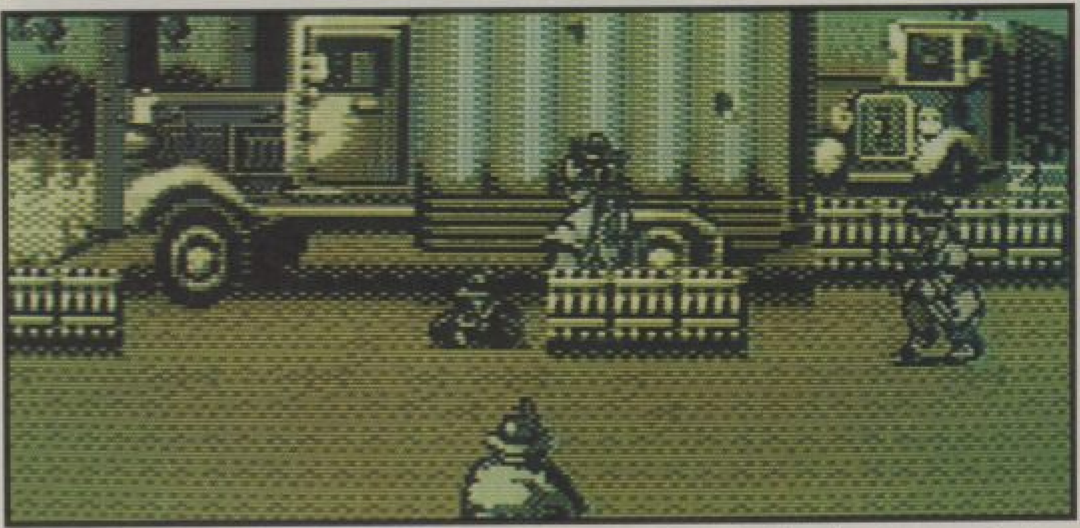


PRESS ANY KEY

Elliot Ness beats the booze racket

THE UNTOUCHABLES

Ocean



Back in the Twenties America was under the iron heel of prohibition, but this didn't stop men like Al Capone producing and distributing illegal booze. Bribery and corruption ruled the police force, with cops well paid by gangsters to turn a blind eye. Federal Agent Elliot Ness was determined to form a group of officers who were above bribery, they were... The Untouchables.

Ocean's six-level game closely follows the plot of the film set in Chicago, and concerns the four FBI agents who became untouchable. Elliot Ness their leader, Stone a young Italian cop, Oscar Wallace a nerdy looking accountant and finally Mallone a wise old Irish cop. Scene one is set in a warehouse suspected of holding illegal booze. But a informer in the police department tips off the mob, so all Ness finds is a band of gun-toting hoodlums.

Some of them do possess information however, so as Ness leaps about on the crates scattered around blasting, the baddies' arrows appear. These lead to one of ten white-suited men who carry the information — shoot them to gain the information, but if one of the baddies grabs it, the man turns white and the chase is on again. Ten percent of the information is collected with each successful 'hit', but a hundred percent is needed to complete the section. Also up for grabs are the occasional violin case and roses; the cases represent collectable machine guns, and roses replenish energy.



Next Ness takes his Untouchables to the US/Canadian border to stop a band of bootleggers escaping. The level starts with Ness lying on the ground in front of a fleet of trucks. The gangsters, surprised by the cops' appearance, take pot shots. With a rifle and telescopic sights he picks off targets as they pop their heads around the trucks. You can dodge the bullets by rolling either to the left or right; or — by rolling off the edge of the screen — one of the other three characters can be selected.

Success here gains the documents Ness needs to convict Capone, but only his accountant can decipher them. So Ness decides to get the guy safely out of the city, but on the way to the station Ness is ambushed in an alleyway. Armed with only a pump-action shotgun you must peek round the corner, pick your target, and let fly. Against you are tommygun-wielding hoods leaning out of windows and cars blasting away at your energy level. As your shotgun is double-barrelled, you must duck back to the entrance to reload. Again, you can switch between the surviving members of the group, and only when all the alleyways are clear, can you continue to the station.

In the next section Ness races down a flight of stairs blasting hoods, and preventing a pram from crashing and bringing the Untouchables' names into disrepute. At the bottom Ness finds that the accountant is being held hostage, and in a first-person perspective shoot out, you as Stone must kill



C64 96%

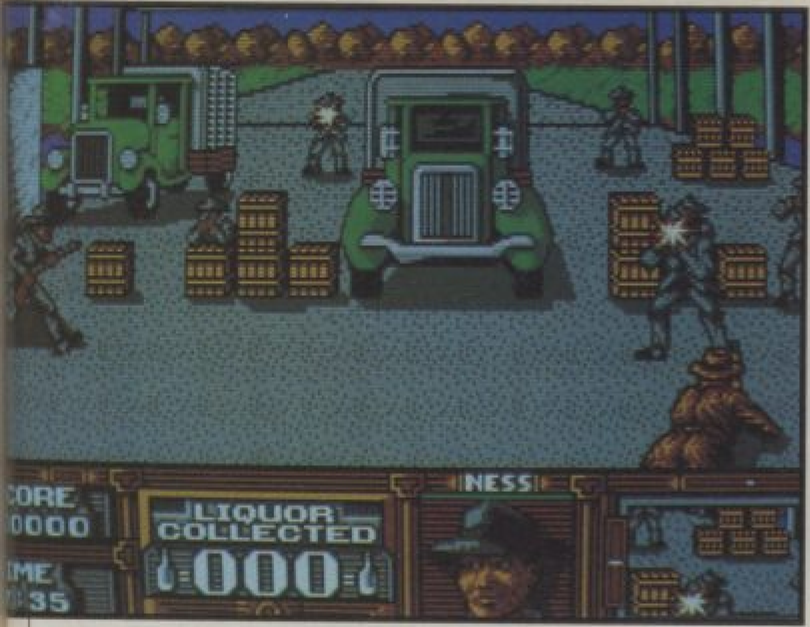
£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Elliot Ness and Co stride around the various sections of the game with great determination and the ingame tunes add a great deal to the atmosphere. Especially good are the newspaper headlines which range from 'Elliot Ness Dies In Blood Bath' to 'Elliot Ness Successfully Convicts Capone'.

SPECTRUM 95%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Again graphical excellence and good tunes (on the 128K version) make the Spectrum version of The Untouchables as much of a must-buy as the C64 game. If you loved the movie and the ancient TV show this is for you.



the hood without harming the accountant (rather like the hostage scene in RoboCop). Capone is finally caught, but beats the murder rap and gets charged with tax evasion. During the trial the final level begins as one of Capone's hoods runs out of the court closely followed by Ness. He's tracked up onto the roof where Ness must continuously shoot the hoodlum until he falls off the roof, and thus end the game.

Special FX (they did Batman — The Caped Crusader, among others) and Ocean bring the Windy City excellently to life on the computer screen. The six levels are all trigger-pumping fun, with suitable graphics to give an authentic Twenties feel, and some nice touches like the flapping of the hood's coat on the final section and the gun reloading in the alley scene. It all makes The Untouchables a winner.

The Games Machine TOP SCORE

OTHER FORMATS
Amiga, Atari ST, PC and Amstrad CPC versions will be along soon. Usual Ocean prices will apply.

TV SPORTS FOOTBALL

Cinemaware/Mirrorsoft ■ ST £24.99

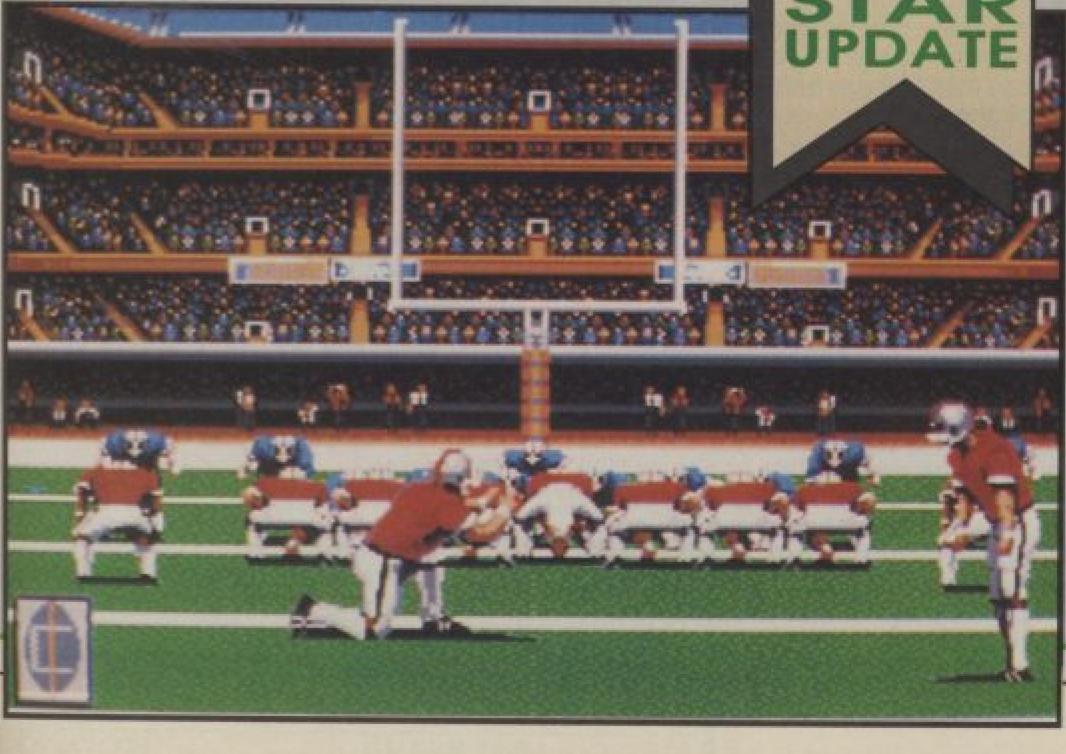
American football gets the movie-like high presentation that is the trade mark of Cinemaware, with cheerleaders and TV presenters rubbing shoulders with the strengthened pads of the gridiron crew. One or two players (either opposing one another or combining forces to control a team) select general team formations then defensive and offensive plays to call in mid-game. All the rules and tactics are translated intact along with a 28 team league.

Sprites are small but well defined and animated graphics — virtually identical to the Amiga, as are the larger, intermission screens. Though with a distinct and mildy unpleasant ST tone, music and sound effects are quite impressive and add to the atmosphere.

There is a BIG difference, however: the ST pitch is only the width of the screen so that it just scrolls vertically. While this damages authenticity it avoids any multi-direction scrolling difficulties and makes for a faster, more arcade-like game all-round. Die-hard American football fans may condone the pitch dimensions but TV Sports Football is probably the best, most detailed sports sims available for the ST.

Machine update 89%

The Games Machine STAR UPDATE



AMSTRAD CPC
Skate Or Die

ELECTRONIC ARTS £9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Spectrum 76% — TGM 018

Graphically the game is colourful (although the two downhill courses are monochromatic) but the sprites are, on the whole, small and blobby. And what on earth happened to the sound guys? We strained our ears to hear a tune or even a sound effect but not a peep there was. Skate Or Die on the Amstrad is a bit of a disappointment, but take a look in any case.

Machine update 65%

AMIGA
Dynamite Dux

ACTIVISION £24.99
Atari ST 83% — TGM023

Bin and his little feathered friend Pin are back (apologies for calling them Din and Tin last month, but that's what Activision said their names were...). The Amiga game sports all the same weird and whacky creatures in a graphical style virtually identical to the ST version, and the going is just as tough. If you love weird Japanese games take a look at Dynamite Dux.

Machine update 83%



PC
Menace

PSYCLAPSE £24.95
Amiga 78% _ TGM013, Atari ST _ 75% TGM015

Despite the slightly jerky scrolling and pathetic sound effects, Menace on the PC is a good blast-'em-up. The swarms of alien uglies give you little chance to escape without putting up some sort of fight, mainly because you only get bolt on weapons by collecting the dosh left behind by destroyed enemy ships. Amiga and ST Menace was good and the PC version is every bit as playable.

Machine update 78%



PRESS ANY KEY

Become an F-1 champion with...

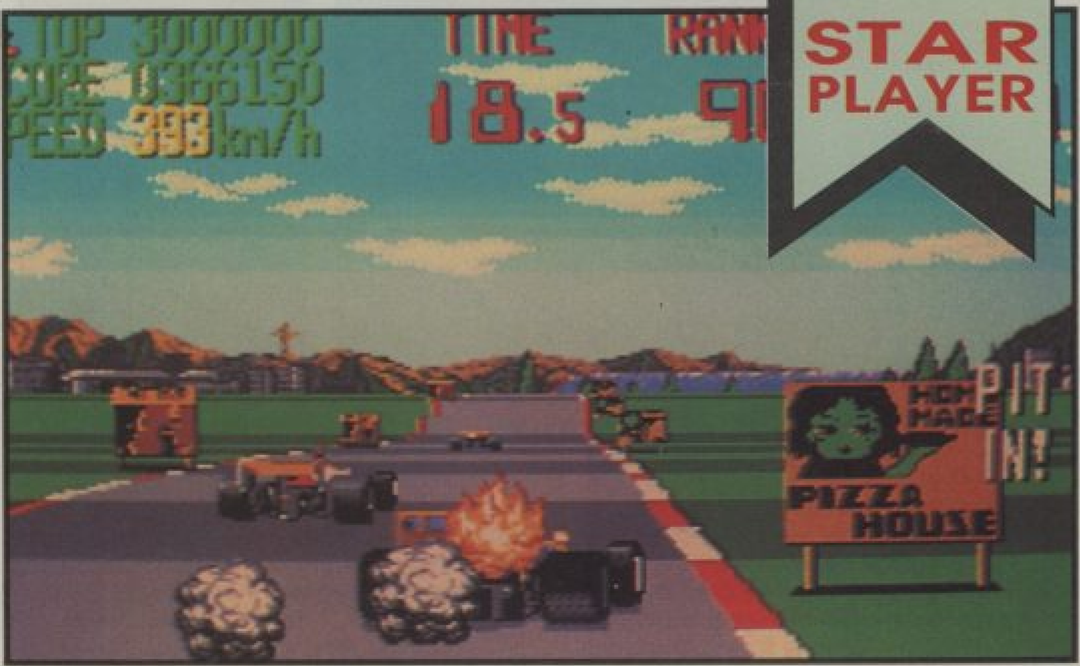
CONTINENTAL CIRCUS

STAR PLAYER

Virgin/Mastertronic

Ever fancied becoming a Formula One champ, standing on the winners' podium with a gleaming trophy in one hand and a beautiful blonde in the other. Well there's little chance you will be able to do this in real life, but with Continental Circus from Virgin you can have second best. Taken from the Taito coin-op that features huge 3-D glasses, the computer version lacks the three-dimensional view, but is a tough and challenging eight-track racing game.

After displaying a bird's-eye view of the next track to be attempted (the first is Brazil) the view changes to a lone car sitting on the starting grid, a scantily clad blonde holds up a board which informs you that five seconds remain before the race starts. Then as the final seconds tick down, the lights on the overhead gantry flash 3-2-1, and with a screech of rubber you're off. Opposition isn't long in showing up because other cars appear with annoying regularity trying to cut you up and force you off the road.

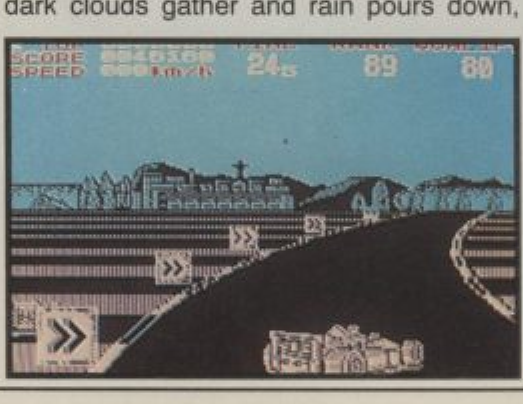


Where there`s smoke there`s fire, a fact brought home only too strongly by Virgin`s conversion, shown particularly above on the Amiga and to a lesser degree on the disappointing Commodore version (left) and the detailed Spectrum (below left)



You start the race at the back of the pack in 100th position, but to qualify for the the next track you must finish the race in 80th position or better. So step on the gas and rip past the opposition. As with most racing games a high/low gear is accessed by pressing fire. At around 200kph change from low to high because you won't go very far otherwise — and the race is against the clock. Checkpoints are scattered around the track which must be reached in the allowed time, with extended play the reward for passing them.

As you tear around the corners watch out for the computer-controlled cars. Collision with these (or the billboards at the trackside) isn't immediately fatal — the back of your car starts to smoke, leave it too long and flames burst out, making it time for a pitstop where mechanics swarm out with fire extinguishers. On later tracks dark clouds gather and rain pours down, making control of the car more difficult (the arcade version asked you to pitstop for wet weather tyres).



Further into the game you visit America, France, Monaco, Germany, Spain, Mexico and Japan. Each track is tougher to complete because every second counts and finishing positions get tighter. for America you need to be in the top 60, and from then on it drops steadily until you get to Japan where you must be in the top three to win the championship and the Formula One crown. The time limit on the first couple of tracks is quite generous, however, so you can concentrate more on jostling your way into a winning position rather than worry about how much time is left.

MC

C64 56%

£14.99 cass,
£19.99 disk

Sadly worst of the four versions reviewed here, the sonics are reasonable, but the graphics are pretty naff. Garish blocky sprites do their utmost to hobble around the tracks, but the action sadly fails to spark any form of excitement in the player. Take a good look at this version before considering purchase.

AMIGA 86%

£19.99

Graphically the Amiga conversion is very close to the arcade game, the colourful well defined sprites scream around the track smoothly and with as much noise as possible — the engine sounds like a real racing car revving up about two inches from your ear. Neat graphical touches also liven the game up, fire extinguisher-wielding mechanics and rain add realism to this brilliant game.

SPECTRUM 85%

£14.99 cass,
£19.99 disk

Despite monochromatic sprites, the attention to detail is commendable, and this is the only computer version which appears to have the tyre-changing arcade scene. The 128K tune is impressive, although the 48K effects are also good. A must-buy for all Speccy owners.

ATARI ST 85%

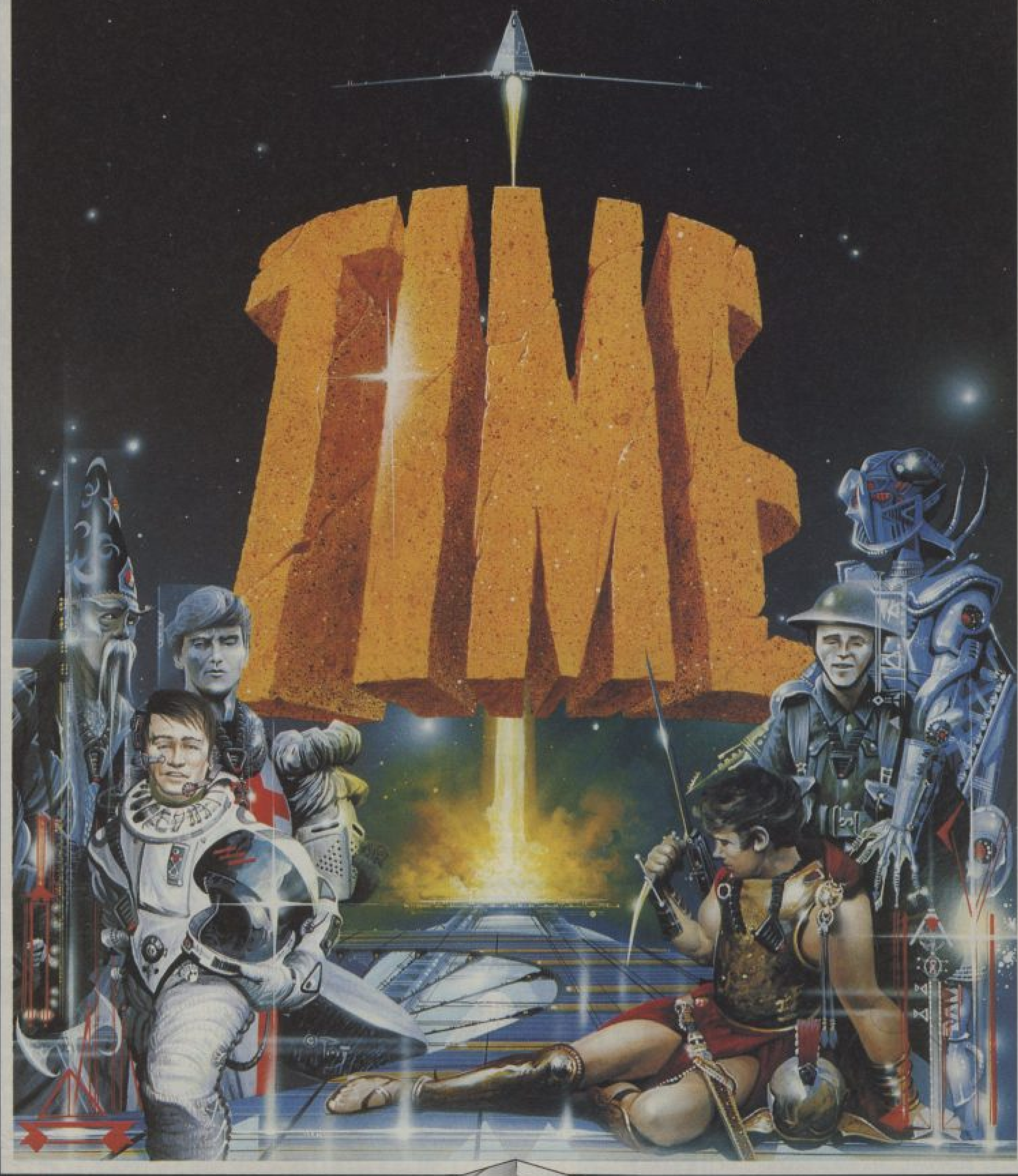
£19.99

Graphically as good as the Amiga, the ST's scrolling is a little faster. This makes avoiding the other racers trickier, but adds to the frustration — especially when the car stops inches short of the finishing line. Sound isn't quite as impressive as on the Amiga, but when the playability is so high who really cares?

OTHER FORMATS

Expect to see the Amstrad CPC version priced 14.99 cass, £19.99 disk soon.

SPACE, MAGIC and MYSTERY. The epic journey through . . .

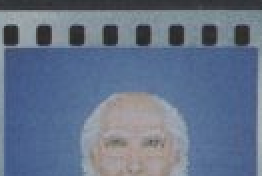


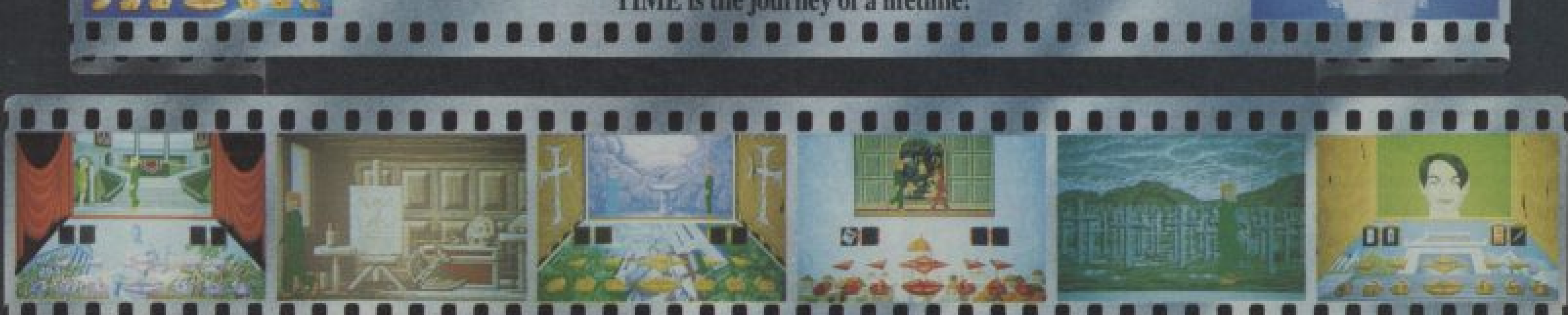
EMPIRE



TIME is a visual feast, with over 100 locations and scores of animated characters. A large orbiting space station to explore, time machines to discover and journeys to make into the past. Brave the battlefields of the Crimea, escape the lions of the Circus Maximus and locate the Amulet of Merlin.

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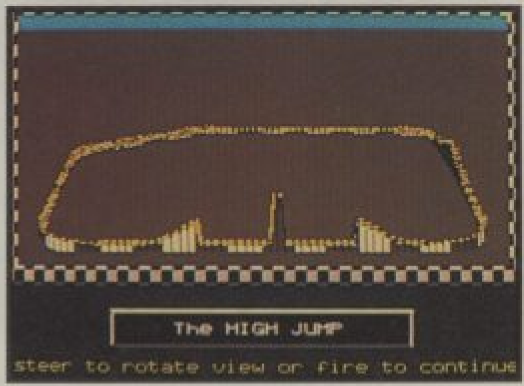
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The Games machine STAR PLAYER

A roller coaster ride to destruction

STUNT CAR RACER

MicroStyle



Set on eight roller coaster-style racing tracks, Stunt Car Racer is a very arcade orientated racing game . One person can compete against the computer, or if a few mates are around challenge them to a multi-player game.

There are four divisions and you start in the fourth, the goal is simple — reach division one and become top racer. Two courses make up each division; in four there are the Little Ramp and The Hump Back, three contains the Stepping Stones and the BIG Ramp. Division two boasts the High Jump and the Roller Coaster, and, most difficult of all, division one has The Ski Jump and the Drawbridge.

Eleven other racers are after the fame and glory as well as you, and none of them stops till they have turned your car into a mangled wreck. After the options have been sorted a division table is shown, which tells you who is where in the league and contains some amusing mug shots of the competitors.

The player's eye view is through the front windscreen, so all that's visible of the car are the front wheels and the massive V-8 engine with its wicked looking exhaust ports that spew flames when the turbo booster kicks in. Inside the car is the steering wheel and several readouts to tell you the amount of laps completed (four in all), the amount of turbo boosts left etc.

As the racing track is a fair way up, the car is winched up on a crane and given a drop start, but It's advisable to use the practice mode until you are confident enough to tackle the racing season, because your car is capable of speeds in excess of 230mph.



To be promoted in the division league you need to win every race in a season and up against some of these computer chappies this is very difficult. And don't think that bombing around the track with the turbo screaming will win you the race, because most of the time all it gains you is an extra couple of inches of damage to the crashometer.

Stunt Car Racer is an action-packed racing game that had us all on the edge of our seats. Background graphics are sparse but when hurtling round a bend at colossal speeds sightseeing is your last consideration. Sound is also thin on the ground consisting mainly of spot effects, but again with your eyes glued to the track this is a minor irritation. Fighting your way to division one is a long and dangerous path, but it is well worth the effort. **MC**



OTHER FORMATS
The Spectrum version should be with you by the time you read this, PC and Amiga games will appear soon. Normal prices are expected to apply.

£24.99

ATARI ST 93%

With its fast moving graphics and pulse-pounding realism, Stunt Car certainly caused a lot of ingame panic around the office. Even though this is a slight change of direction for MicroProse from their usual tally ho chaps-type game, we're pleased to see that the same sort of attention to detail is present here. Stunt Car Racer is a definite must-buy.

APB

Domark/Tengen £14.99 cass, £19.99 disk
■ Commodore 64

Atari ST 84%, Spectrum 86% — TGM023

Officer Bob continues his beat, and we must say that this version is as good as the ST and Speccy games reviewed last issue. The only slight niggle is that the timer on the Commodore seems to be less lenient to the player than on other versions, maybe it's just our imaginations. But the graphics are colourful and the law breakers are a pain to catch, so playability doesn't suffer.

Machine update 85%



The Games machine STAR UPDATE

Having a whale of a time

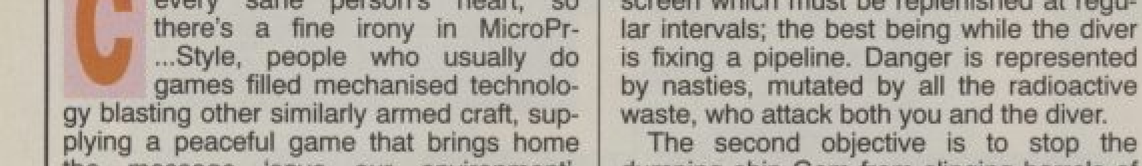
RAINBOW WARRIOR

MicroStyle

Conservation is a subject close to every sane person's heart, so there's a fine irony in MicroPr-...Style, people who usually do games filled mechanised technology blasting other similarly armed craft, supplying a peaceful game that brings home the message 'save our environment'. Programmed with the full support of Greenpeace, Rainbow Warrior is a seven-part game which sets you tasks to correct man's selfishness.

The first is to block up four pipelines pumping radioactive waste into the sea. You play a dolphin who guides a diver to the pipes, ensuring he has a full air tank. There's an oxygen bar at the top of the screen which must be replenished at regular intervals; the best being while the diver is fixing a pipeline. Danger is represented by nasties, mutated by all the radioactive waste, who attack both you and the diver.

The second objective is to stop the dumping ship Gem from slinging barrels of radioactive waste into the sea. This is done by occupying three cranes that winch the barrels, but first you have to reach the ship. You're aboard a dingy — you're no longer a dolphin! — which is being bombarded by barrels, water jets and a variety of other missiles. Once aboard, you climb each crane in turn to occupy it. Easier said than done when the crew members are doing their best to stop you.



Next you join the Save The Whale campaign by controlling a whale who moves across the bottom of the screen, firing balls of water at a hidden picture. Where they hit, small sections of the picture are revealed, but watch out for the meanies. Whaling ships. if hit, lob harpoons at the whale; margarine tubs wipe out sections of the picture, as do perfume bottles. When the picture is revealed the section ends.

Section four takes place at Muckybridge power station, where you attach 12 letters to three chimneys to spell the words: STOP ACID RAIN. Letters are delivered by dingys floating past, and your task is to climb down to each and collect the letter before ascending the relevant chimney to deposit the letter. Preventing you are spanners and lumps of coal lobbed at you by station workmen, and policemen, acid rain clouds and security guards. These must be avoided because contact with any of them ends the game very rapidly.

Parts five and six are set at the poles. Antarctica is visited first. The object is to knock out aerosol cans with snowballs before they can destroy the ozone layer and irradiate the penguins — though if affected, penguins turn nasty and kill you. Additional hazards are base workers who chase you when the penguins are taking a breather, and radiation rays. Next the Arctic, where baby seals are saved from culling by spraying them with paint (no CFCs in those cans, we trust...). Hunters and nuclear submarines are a nuisance here, but save the seals you must.

The final level is similar to the third in as much as you reveal a hidden picture. You control the Rainbow Warrior which sits at the bottom of the screen firing missiles at various objects. Some — like radiation

Geting into laser breath

DRAGON SPIRIT

Tengen/Domark

This sword and sorcery jaunt has already graced the illustrious pages of this magazine, on Japanese wonder machine, the PC Engine (TGM017, 65%). As Domark are set to release the home computer conversions, let's look briefly at plot and gameplay, shall we...?

It's the standard damsel-in-distress yarn: the fair Princess Alicia has been kidnapped by nasty dragon Zawell. By a happy coincidence, royal soldier Amul has the pretty damn amazing ability to transform himself into a blue dragon, and so sets off to rescue her. You are that vast, horned, flying reptile.

Zawell's army of beasts — generally avians but some creatures fire up from the ground — attack constantly through the vertically-scrolling levels, but they can be dealt with by breathing fire (predictably) and dropping bombs (though quite how they're produced and where they're released from is a mystery best left uninvestigated, methinks). Your power can be increased by collecting eggs, which increase breath-strength (a bit like garlic) or add up to two extra heads to your scaly body.

Although clichéd for an arcade adventure, the scenario is quite novel for a shoot-'em-up, but unfortunately that can't be said for any other element of Dragon Spirit. Few add-ons — a simple power-up and two- or three-way fire (literally!) — don't help the over-used, over-familiar vertical blaster, and unspectacular adversaries and attack waves mean this will disappear with little trace as so many shoot-'em-ups have before.

As a conversion, Dragon Spirit is fairly accurate, but the coin-op was middle-of-the-road to begin with, so there was never much hope. Zawell, Domark, that's the way it goes.

WL

OTHER FORMATS
Commodore 64 (same price), Amiga, ST (both £19.99) and PC (£24.99) should all be out as you read this.

SPECTRUM 70%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Scrolling is fine but the scenery, though neatly fashioned, is plain. The dragon looks a little squashed and takes colour clash around the otherwise monochrome playing area but is pleasantly animated. Though some are vague in definition, there are some good enemy sprites, particularly the large and impressive end-of-level creatures. A nice conversion that makes the most of the coin-op.

CPC 63%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk
Mode 2 is used haphazardly. Both backgrounds and sprites are blocky and are unattractive, indistinct representations of scenes and creatures. Colour is liberally used but only has a notably good effect on the big monsters, where there's room for shading. Scrolling judders irritatingly but theme music makes great use of the CPC's limited audio capabilities.



Mutant penguins, CFCs, giant protest banners, sewage pipes and snowballs are unusual game elements which still only make a sedate, aimless game

symbols, toxic signs, nuclear power signs and barrels — when hit destroy parts of the picture. Good objects — doves and letters — fill it in.

Rainbow Warrior, with three disks and seven sections, is a big game, although most sections are fairly simple in design so they frustrate and become boring all too quickly. Messing about with three disks becomes a pain and quickly lowers the sense of worthiness playing the game is supposed to create.

ATARI ST 66%

£24.99

The graphics adequately convey the generally aquatic nature of the game, but really this is an interesting idea let down by an overinvolved and awkward loading system, and the simple, frustrating gameplay.

OTHER FORMATS
The release of Amiga (£24.99) and Commodore 64 (£14.99 cass, £19.99 disk) versions is imminent.

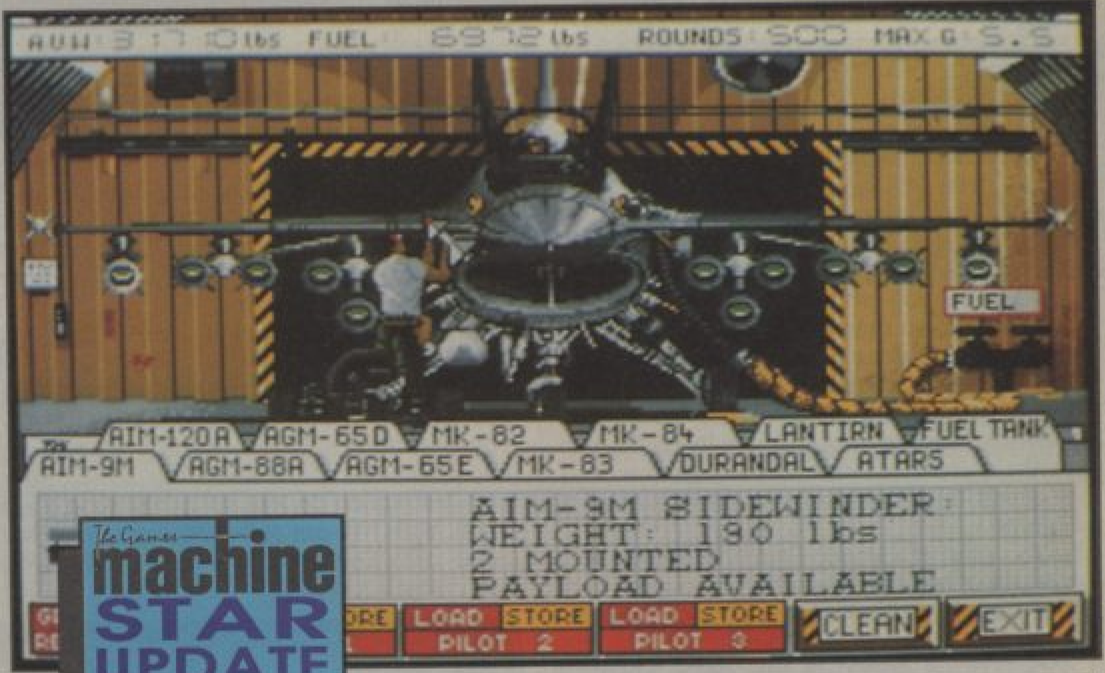
F-16 COMBAT PILOT

Digital Integration Amiga £24.95
PC 93%, ST 94% — TGM015

This is one of the most (if not THE most) challenging flight sims, a point discovered in training. There are five missions to complete before the big one, and even those taking place near base involve enemy MiGs and tanks. Those completed, Operation Conquest begins, where time is split between defending allied territory and attacking the enemy.

Cosmetically, the operations room has been changed graphically and sound effects are fuller and more realistic. It's a little slower than the ST version but this has virtually no effect on gameplay. Otherwise identical, Amiga Combat Pilot has as much realism, challenge and variety as you could want in a flight simulator.WL

Machine update 93%



The Games Machine STAR UPDATE



Probably the weakest of the Tengen/Atari coin-op licences, the polished graphics and presentation of the PC Engine version made it a moderate game for TGM018. Domark's computer conversions, however, aren't nearly as professionally and carefully produced, as can be seen from this blocky end-of-level Amstrad shot

PC ENGINE
Side Arms

CAPCOM/NEC £24.95
C64 59% — TGM004
Atari ST 72% — TGM009

The Engine conversion of this ageing two-player shoot-'em-up isn't. A two-player game, that is, although the mighty alpha icon remains so that a second player sprite may bolt-on and double the actual player's power. Sprites make great use of colour, looking convincingly metallic and very arcade-like. Though smoothly scrolling, backgrounds are a generally plain, but with the flashy action going on in front of them this is easily ignored. Music burbles away enthusiastically but ineffectively, but sound effects are sharp. A fairly accurate conversion of a middling coin-op, and a very difficult blaster.

Machine update 74%

PC
MicroProse Soccer

MICROPROSE £24.95 C64 89% — TGM015, Spectrum 80% — TGM020, Amiga 80% — TGM021

Definition is very close to the functional clarity of the Amiga/ST, and in EGA graphics mode, so is the colour. Scrolling is reasonable and music/sound effects are a nice try at getting something decent out of the aurally incompetent PC. Keyboard control is a finger-twister but Soccer is as fun on as on any other computer, and is probably the best PC football game around.

Machine update 81%

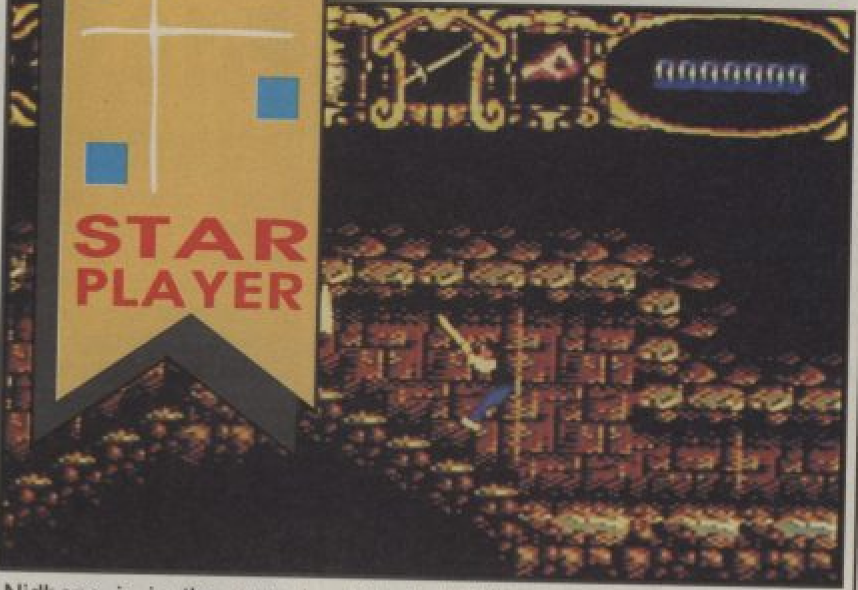
PRESS ANY KEY

The Games machine STAR PLAYER

Are you trying to take the Myth?

MYTH

System 3



Since the dawn of time mankind has blamed many natural disasters on divine unseen powers to cover a lack of knowledge. This is how the notion of gods and divine beings came about, and for many centuries different cultures have turned to their own personal deity for help. But in Myth the gods turn to mortal man for assistance.

An evil god called Dameron has turned good gods bad and so upset history. The few good gods who remain aren't allowed to interfere, so they call on you _ a hip and trendy 20th Century man _ to battle for the past... the present... and the future. Donning your stone-washed Levi 501s and Reebok trainers you prepare to battle with mythological beasties lurking in the four sections that make up this adventure of a lifetime.

You start in Graeco-Roman times where the pits of hell have swallowed you up. Your first task is to dispose of a band of skeletons. As usual in this type of game the opposition is armed to the teeth, whereas all you have for protection are your fists and feet. But by killing the meanies, weapons can be picked up; some like the sword can be used for general nastiness, but others like Achilles's shield and the Devil's fork have a specific function which you must discover.

Next you are whisked off to rediscover Viking and Norse mythology. A Viking longboat must be rid of its very bloodthirsty crew before you're whisked off to a forest to battle trolls, goblins and an immortal dragon called Nidhogg. Along the way a good witch named Brunhilda is rescued from a band of unpleasant fire nymphs, and then Nidhogg is in the way. How do you hurt an immortal dragon? Having worked out this burning conundrum are transported to Valhalla, home of the Norse gods, where Thor the god of Thunder and Odin his father wait to fight you.

And then it's back further in time to tackle a pyramid-load of Egyptian ancients. First discover the three secret in the pyramid's side to lead you to the Atumas Eye. Many pitfalls and traps wait to kill any adventurer stupid enough to blunder into them. Your final destination on this section is King Tut's Tomb. With him out of the way, only the final battle with Dameron stands between you and the salvation of the human race.

Much detail has been piled into Myth and the main character movement is excellent as he kicks, punches, leaps and swipes away with an impressive array of weapons. Other sprites, too, are a visual delight _ Medusa tries her best to turn you to stone, the Hydra puts all its heads to good use. Perhaps the difficulty level has been set a touch too high, but as always practice does make perfect.

OTHER FORMATS
Amiga, Atari ST and Amstrad CPC versions will be in the shops soon, normal prices will apply.



SPECTRUM 92%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

The main character sprite is more of a stickman than a real character, but the animation is pretty damn impressive, which, in combination with tough and inventive gameplay, makes this version as highly rateable as the C64 game.

C64 92%

£9.99 cass, £14.99 disk

Graphically and sonically Myth is great, pretty backgrounds and convincing sprites blend well with the atmospheric sound effects and Maniacs Of Noise-created title tune. A pleasant romp through mythology that all archaeological students and zappers alike should find fun.

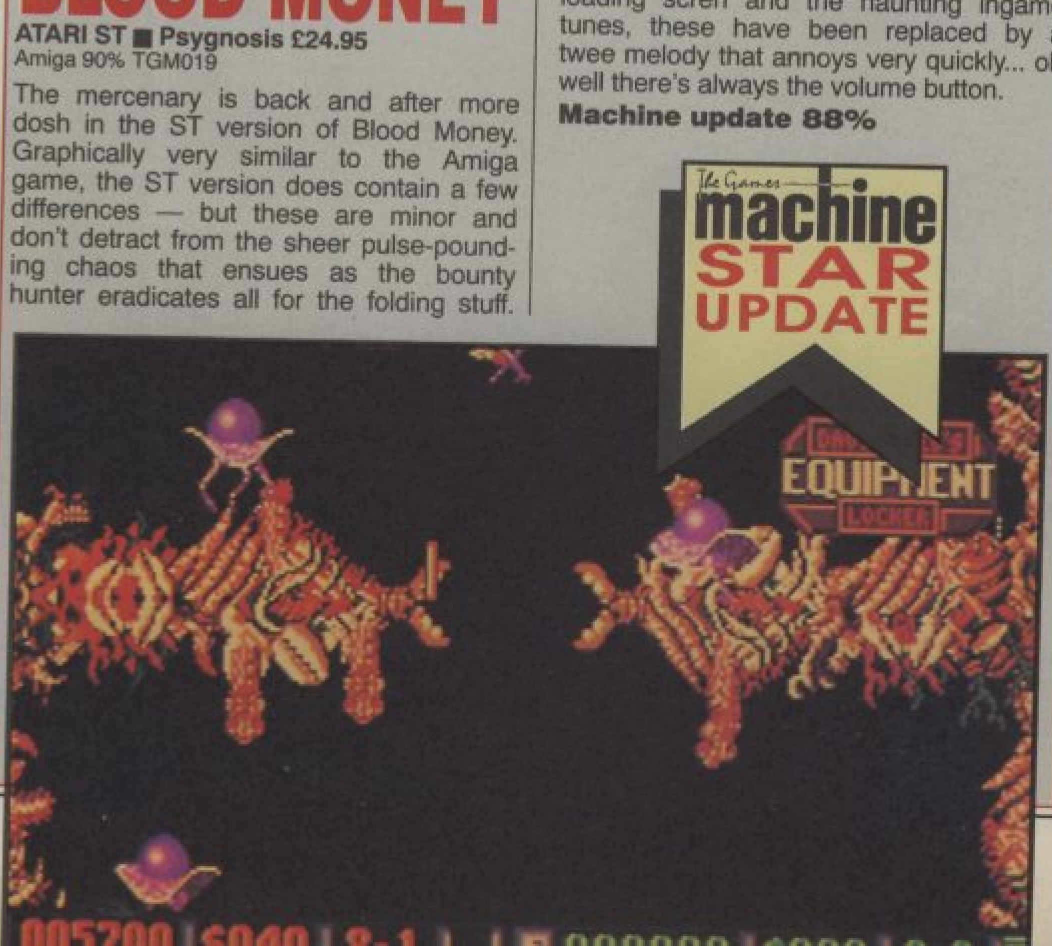
BLOOD MONEY

ATARI ST ■ Psygnosis £24.95
Amiga 90% TGM019

The mercenary is back and after more dosh in the ST version of Blood Money. Graphically very similar to the Amiga game, the ST version does contain a few differences — but these are minor and don't detract from the sheer pulse-pounding chaos that ensues as the bounty hunter eradicates all for the folding stuff. The only major omissions are the brilliant loading scren and the haunting ingame tunes, these have been replaced by a twee melody that annoys very quickly... oh well there's always the volume button.

Machine update 88%

The Games machine STAR UPDATE



SOFTWARE SNAX

SCI-FI

Light Source ■ Amiga £9.99

The bright shining hope for humankind, Earth Base 3, is in TROUBLE. A meteor storm is heading its way, cataclysmic disaster is imminent, and they've run out of coffee. Fear not: the amazingly high-tech Vulcon 2 spacecraft has just been completed and super pilot Stellar is ready to tackle the problem.

Destroying some of the meteors on his way through the storm, help can be found at Earth Base 4, on Mars's moon, Io. That would be too easy for the highly talented Stellar, so, luckily enough, enemy craft are out for blood. Some leave behind spheres when destroyed, which are collected for use at a weapons ship, which passes by at regular intervals. There, a robot salesman nods or shakes his head to indicate the viability of purchase of one of the standard shoot-'em-up add-ons.

Not impressive; sprites are amataurish, inept and dreary, as are backgrounds — what little of them there are. Though the two- and occasionally three-layer parallax scrolling is smooth, any illusion of depth is ruined by a hopelessly weakly drawn starfield. Ponderous, off-key music is compensated for, marginally, by half-decent effect samples, including a laser blast from Star Wars.

Gameplay is as insipid as Sci-Fi's aesthetic qualities — or rather, lack of them. Simplistic gameplay is just not interesting, and if not boring, certainly superficial. Not worth the energy required to waggle a joystick and not worth a tenner. **WL**

Machine rating 17%



SLAYER

Hewson Atari ■ ST £19.99

Well here they go again. Some alien race or other has become a bit miffed with life, and rather than sit depressed and listen to The Smiths, like anyone else would, they've vowed revenge. Upon everyone and everything, really, starting from near their home system and working outwards.

You're the Slayer, the inter-galactic dogooder who's chosen to stop them before it gets out of hand. Entering their horizontally scrolling airspace, your aim is to destroy as much as you can — their ships and ground-to-air defences — so that their forces are crippled. To aid this task, collectable items include orbiting drones and rapid- and vertical-firing lasers.

Slayer is neatly if simply presented, with sharp metallic graphics reminiscent of Hewson's own Cybernoid. Scrolling is smooth but both title music and spot effects are bog-standard ST (not kind to the ears).

Around about Christmas '88, Slayer was a nice little R-Type/Zynaps/Armalyte variant for the C64. At three quid, it was quite impressive. At full price on 16-bit, Slayer's much less of a bargain, and doesn't stand out among the ever-growing crowd of horizontal blasters. The Commodore version was a very difficult game and, if anything, this conversion is tougher still. Frustration and induced apathy will ensure this game gets little play. **WL**

Machine rating 41%

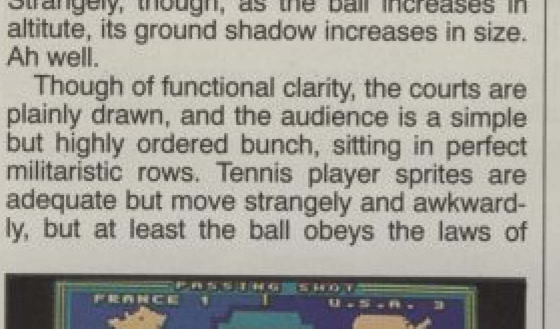
PASSING SHOT

Imageworks ■ Amiga £24.99

Crack open the barley water for the conversion of Sega's tennis coin-op, a sport rarely seen in the arcades. For one or two players and at four skill levels, events in England, France, Australia or the USA are entered at the quarter-final stage or above.

Other than for serving, Passing Shot takes the original angle of viewing the court from above, so that the ball increases in size visually as it's hit over the net. Strangely, though, as the ball increases in altitute, its ground shadow increases in size. Ah well.

Though of functional clarity, the courts are plainly drawn, and the audience is a simple but highly ordered bunch, sitting in perfect militaristic rows. Tennis player sprites are adequate but move strangely and awkwardly, but at least the ball obeys the laws of gravity and physics reasonably. Speech samples are a trifle noisy and the ball sounds like it's hit with frying pan rather than a racket.

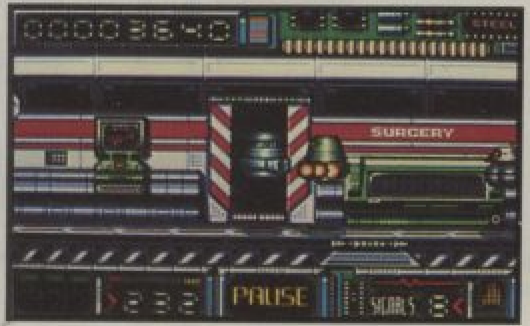


Control response is too slow, players strolling casually toward the ball to give it an exaggerated circular swipe. Scrolling doesn't consistently follow the ball so that by the time your sprite comes into view, it can be too late to return the ball. Though unique, the plan view makes a familair sport abstract and, with the aforementioned awkwardness, means 16-bit owners would be better off with Great Courts. **WL**

Machine rating 56%

STEEL

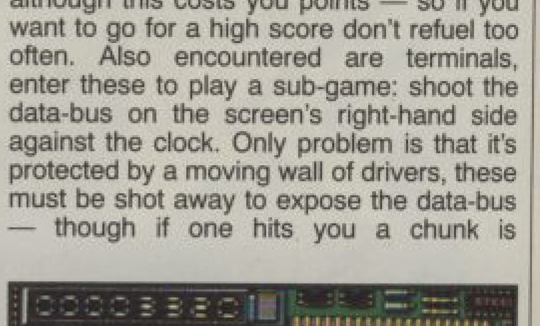
Hewson ■ AMIGA £19.99 ATARI ST £19.99



Robot controlled spaceships have their advantages, they also unfortunately have their disadvantages. Occasionally for no apparent reason the robotic crew get their circuits in a twist and go completely loopy. The spaceship Steel has suffered this fate, so you, disguised as a robot commando, enter the ship in an attempt to shut down the security systems and thus render the robots harmless.

To accomplish the shutdown eight cartridges must be found as you wander the ship's seemingly endless corridors. These must be taken to a secret room and inserted in their relevant slots. But things are rarely that simple; as you wander the corridors (map makers will have a field day here) the maniac robots attack without mercy. Of course you're armed, so a swift jab of the firebutton sends a stream of laser death in their direction.

Though if this fails try ramming the little blighters, but be warned: contact lowers your energy level. Along the way fuel can be picked up from refuelling points, although this costs you points — so if you want to go for a high score don't refuel too often. Also encountered are terminals, enter these to play a sub-game: shoot the data-bus on the screen's right-hand side against the clock. Only problem is that it's protected by a moving wall of drivers, these must be shot away to expose the data-bus — though if one hits you a chunk is



knocked off the timer.

If successful, a slot opens in the hidden room so when the elusive control panel is found you can ram the cartridges in and be home in time for a well earned oil break. Slow, because of all the wandering needed to get anywhere, blast-'em-up fans won't find enough to keep them interested.

Machine Rating Amiga 65%
Atari ST 64%

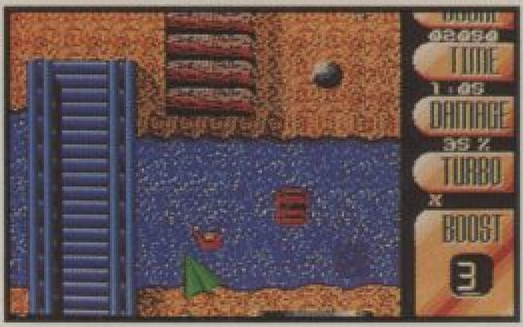
NITRO BOOST CHALLENGE

CodeMasters ■ Amiga £

When the suave, sophisticated, intelligent actors bottle out of a dangerous film scene, it's time for the greasy, crude, stupid stuntmen to step into their shoes. In CodeMasters' latest production, you're one such thick stunt driver, first getting behind the wheel of a rally car.

Vertically scrolling levels simulate (of course) scenes for a film and the amount of money earnt depends upon how dangerous and exciting the action was. Danger is easy to come by: other cars fire at you and hang-gliders drop bombs, the course is littered with bombs, ramps propel the vehicle high into the air, and earthquakes split the ground ahead!! Nitro boost capsules can be collected to later turbo the craft out of trouble.

'Colourful but crude' nicely sums up the graphics, whose simple style is very 8-bit — including some blockiness. Scrolling is fine and music pleasingly high-paced, but effect samples are weak and clichéd.



Gameplay is very basic — just race up the screen as quickly as possible, dodging bombs and other vehicles, occasionally managing to fire a shot back. It seems CodeMasters have been playing Ocean's Run The Gauntlet as Nitro Boost is similar to the races of that multi-event product except on a straight course and with no direct opposition. Without these, Nitro Boost is a pointless Challenge, so stuntmen are advised to purchase Ocean's game. **WL**

Machine rating 37%

POWER LEAGUE II

Hudson Soft ■ PC Engine £24.95

Sounding more like an arcade racing game than anything else, Power League II is another product to feed Japan's strange obsession for computerised(/consolised?) baseball. This is the sequel to the first Engine ball-slogging, home-running game.

Although it requires competetent Japanese to use and appreciate properly, Power League II's front end allows all aspects of team selection/creation to be adjusted. The game itself is a standard translation of the sport: the player's position on the batting square can be adjusted, the pitcher can vary his throws, and when a fielder has been guided to retrieve a thwacked ball, the joypad position determines the base he throws it back to.

Sprites on the batting/pitching screen are big, bold and colourful, and reasonably well animated. The much wider angled views used to show the fielding feature much plainer sprites, but they're adequate considering their lesser stature. The backgrounds are boring — endless rows of flat seats — and music is highly forgettable. Sound highlights (well, sort-of) are the frivolous but unclear bursts of Japanese-accented speech.

To be fair, there's not much you can do with baseball and Hudson Soft have done their best. It uses the standard viewpoints and control methods, is neatly presented, and is fairly playable although it really is little different from the first Power League game. Baseball is at its best when played in real life but if it's one of your obsessions and you're an avid PC Engineer, this is the product for you. **WL**

Machine rating 73%

WINDOW WIZARD

Reline ■ PC £TBA

Now we've seen it all! A game where you control a window cleaner sprite! Aboard a remarkably swift and manoeuvrable cleaner's hoist, the wiz has to polish all the dirty panes of each building before he can move onto the next. Various gormless occupiers open the windows to stick their heads out, hindering progress, but worse are the friendly souls who sever the hoist's rope.

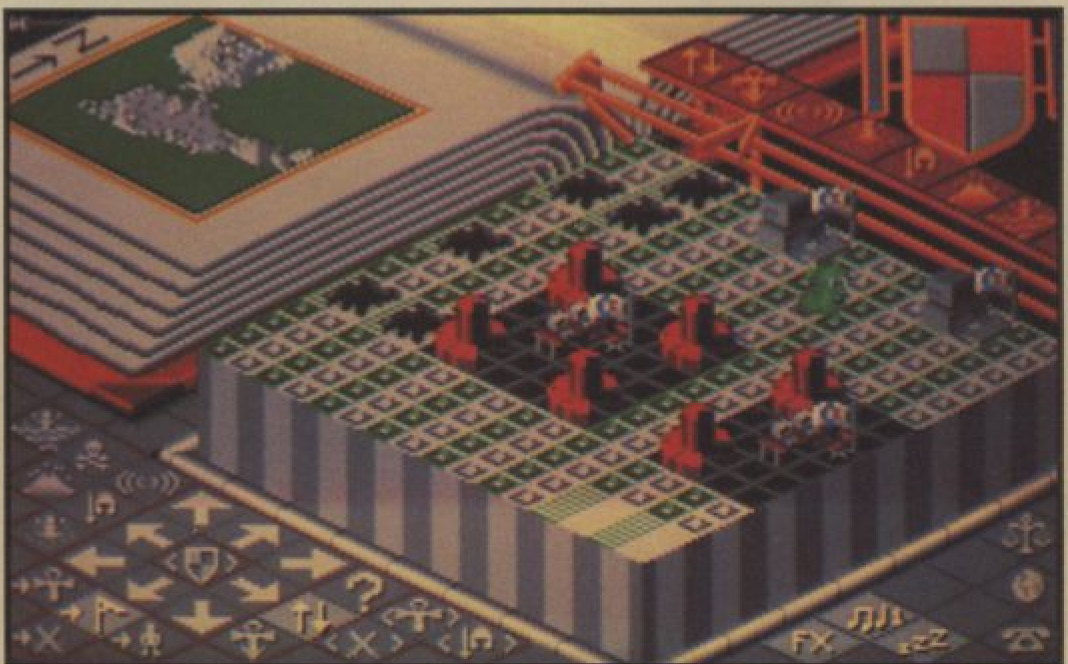
POPULOUS — THE PROMISED LANDS

Electronic Arts ■ Amiga/Atari ST £9.99

Think that Populous is the bee's knees, the best thing since sliced bread? Was your life pale and empty before you discovered the magnificently computerised godly powers of creation and destruction? Yes, Bullfrog's land-shaping epic is indeed one of the most compelling games of recent times.

But think. There are many different worlds to conquer, of desert, lava, snow and meadow, but don't all those huts, castles and knights get a bit repetitive, a bit boring? No? Well either way, you're sure to welcome the arrival of the Promised Lands, five COMPLETELY new worlds to supplement your original Populous.

As usual, there are different limitations imposed on both side's capabilities, but how about having sheriffs and cowboys running around a cactus-littered plain, developing fort settlements? In addition to Wild West, there's another historical landscape, Revolutionary France, whose graphics include guillotines! There's also a surreal side to the expansion disk: Block Land is contructed from plastic units, like Lego, and is populated by curious doll-like people, while on the chequer board of Silly Land green and red monsters create shiny geometric abodes.

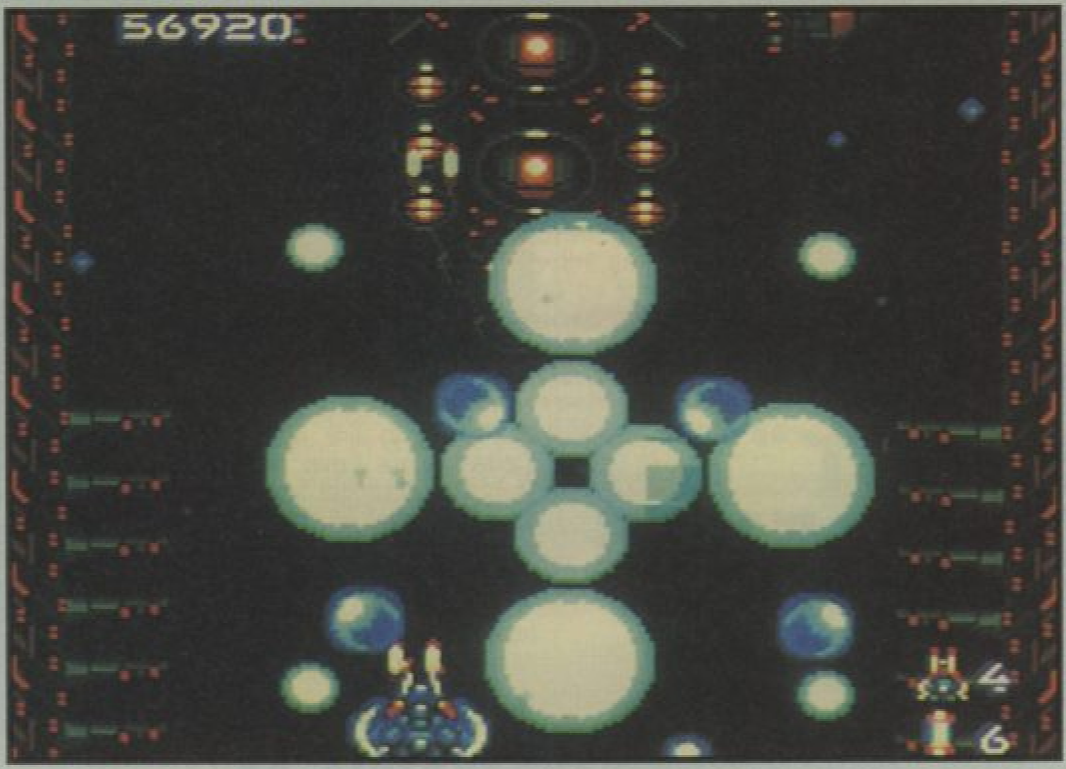


Any proud owner of Populous owes it to themselves to buy and then visit the Promised Lands. For those who haven't succumbed yet, it will hopefully give incentive for more people to discover Electronic Arts's multi-award-winning game. Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got to help some furry creatures build giant pinball houses. **WL**

PRESS ANY KEY

GUNHED

Hudson Soft £24.95 ■ PC Engine



Gunhed is a strange name for a game, but as none of us in the office is fluent in Japanese (gibberish perhaps), we can't translate the instructions. But with action as fast and frenetic as this who really gives a damn about the plot: Gunhed is a multi-level vertical shoot-'em-up that wrecks both joypad and the player's hand. Wave after wave of xenophobic aliens, laser turrets and missile launchers try denting the armour plating of your craft, but with a bit of smartarse piloting and the variety of bolt-on weapons, you may just survive to the end of the current level.

And the weapons are AWESOME! When certain of the enemy are destroyed pods bearing different icons drop slowly to the bottom of the screen, pick these up and you can collect shields, homing missiles, multi-bots, muliple fire etc — but be careful, certain weapons cancel others out.

Gunhed is fast and mean, with a graphic style and some ingame tunes reminiscent of the pinball game Alien Crush. Even with multiple weapons you won't get very far in your first few games, but luckily you are drawn back to try that tricky section just once more. In short Gunhed is an arcade quality shoot-'em-up to provides your trigger finger with a good workout. **MC**

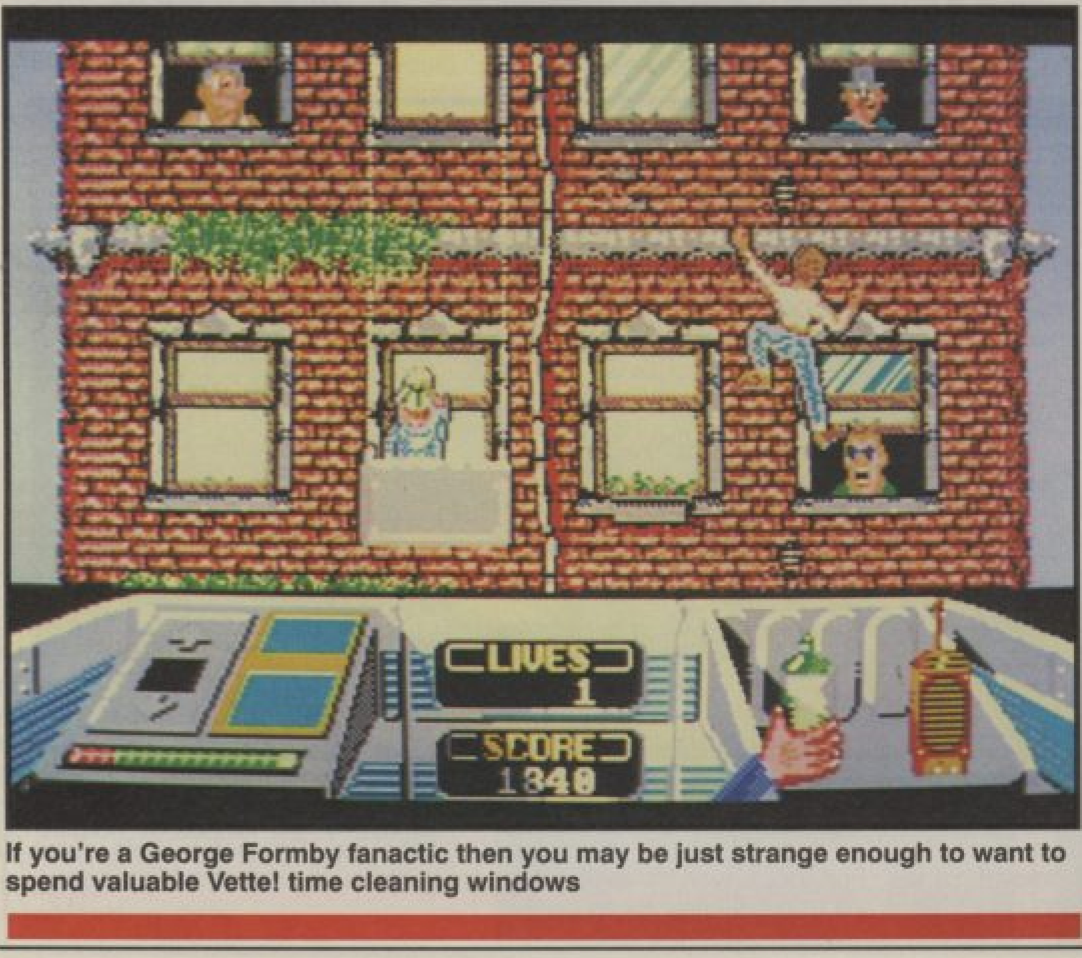
Machine rating 83%

EGA is used to produce a predictably colourful game with some cartoon-like characters to help the otherwise repetative view of row upon row of bricks and windows. Animation is good but iffy scrolling and hoist movement leave something to be desired, as does the sound, of course.

You may think polishing up panes is about as interesting as, well, cleaning several dozen windows, but once you've broken in your chamois leather and got used to your purple bucket and squeegee, you'll be laughing. Hysterically, most probably — Window Wizard is the most simple and boring yet frustrating game to be seen in many a month.

People who watch from the windows spend an awfully long time doing nothing else; it's often the case that you find yourself wandering around the face of the building waiting for a window to be closed so you've something to clean. Death has a nasty habit of arriving quickly and with little or no warning — not good for the patience or blood pressure. As interesting as a wet sponge and as frustrating as trying to fold water. **WL**

Machine rating 41%



If you're a George Formby fanactic then you may be just strange enough to want to spend valuable Vette! time cleaning windows

BATTLE VALLEY

Hewson Amiga ■ £19.99

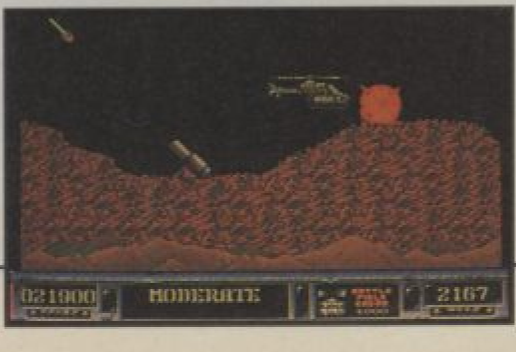
Every silver lining has a cloud. A peace summit has resulted in the world's nations deactivating all medium-range missiles. Except two. These have been stolen by a terrorist organisation who are using them to hold Western civilisation to ransom (in a quite remarkably large building) — if their imprisoned colleagues are not released, the warheads will be launched.

There are six bases to destroy and two seperate missile silos. Control alternates between a helicopter and tank, the former's winch used to repair bridges so that the tank may progress. Both vehicles' weaponry is necessary to destroy the terrorists' defences.

A couple of years back Battle Valley was an 8-bit budget game but Hewson have obviously seen fit to resurrect it as a 16-bit title. The real question is why. It was great as a neat, cheap blast but there isn't sufficient depth or challenge to hold the attention long today so pricing is dubious.

Scrolling is fine, backgrounds unobtrusive and sprites neat and detailed; effects are average samples. Simple gameplay and nonchalant adversaries mean Battle Valley is somewhat less than enthralling. For real action in the same vain, get hold of the excellent Silkworm. **WL**

Machine rating 53%



The Games machine

NEXT MONTH



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